# LITTLE FADETTE

GEORGE SAND

# LITTLE FADETTE

Translated by HAMISH MILES

ST. PAUL
PUBLIC LIBRARY

LONDON
THE SCHOLARTIS PRESS
30 MUSEUM STREET, W.C. 1.
1928

449285

CHILDREN'S ROOM
J FICTION
COPY

ST. PAUL
PUBLIC LIBRARY

## A NOTE ON "LITTLE FADETTE"

*La Petite Fadette* was the third of those delicate, clear-toned tales of rustic life which the stormy spirit of George Sand produced between 1846 and 1848. A few years earlier, in 1844, she had shown in *Jeanne* that at least one book of simple pastoral beauty was struggling within her to be born. When time and circumstance were ripe, there were three—*François le Champi, La Mare au Diable,* and *La Petite Fadette;* and, like the twins whose fortunes form the pattern of this last, all three stories of her native Berry are so well matched in their qualities of bodily form and fine sensibility that it is hard to point to one as preferable to another.

The present novel began to appear as the feuilleton in the *Journal des Débats* on December 1st, 1848. It had been written during the previous summer at Nohant, whither Madame Sand had retired to seek repose after months of the revolutionary turmoil into which she had flung herself. For the publication of the tale in book form, she wrote two distinct prefaces, the first dated in September, 1848, but the second, which really replaced the first, in December, 1851. It was in the opening paragraph of this second preface that she explained exactly why she had turned to the impassioned contemplation of such unwontedly tranquil scenes. *La Petite Fadette,* it is clear, represented an almost desperate effort to shake off the dust and grime of political battling and catch the voice of a pure and lyric romanticism:

> "It was soon after the ill-omened days of June, 1848," she wrote, "that, heartsore and troubled to the depths of my being by the storms without, I

strove to recover in solitude, if not calm, at least faith. If I could claim to be a philosopher, I could believe, or pretend, that faith in ideas will induce tranquillity of mind in the presence of the disastrous facts of our present-day history. But to me it has not proved so; and I humbly confess that, in an artist's soul, the door cannot be barred, by any certainty of a providential future, against the pain of enduring a present that is clouded and torn by civil war."

These prefaces, which are well worth the attention of anyone interested in the spiritual adventures of George Sand, are almost the only direct personal expression of the author in the novel which follows. It is important to recall that her intention was to give these bucolic stories the collective title of *Les Veillées du Chanvreur,* for they purport to be told, as fireside stories of the winter evenings, by an old village hemp-beater. This convention secured both the detachment of narration and the simplicity of outline which give the book its peculiar charm. But it was not easy. It was necessary, she said, to " translate " the rude rustic speech that she had in her own memory of such tales, speech redolent of the old untutored French of past centuries, into the language of her own day, her own class. Yet it was no less necessary to preserve the rustic simplicity of *idea;* and so, as she said, she had to tell her story as if she had " on her right a Parisian talking the modern tongue, and on her left a peasant, before whom she would not wish to say a single phrase or word that he could not fully grasp. She had to speak with clarity for the Parisian, with naivety for the peasant."

It is a slightly comical picture that Madame Sand painted of her task; but it indicates her difficulties very clearly. And it indicates also, if I may say so, the main difficulties of her English translator. The limpidity of style in *La Petite Fadette* is often almost poetic in its

quality. It is hardly too much to say that the clear summer light of Central France, where the book is so deeply rooted, is diffused through all its pages; and these pages are sprinkled often, as with unfamiliar flowers, with the old, half-forgotten words of the country folk of Berry. These last I have not attempted to transplant: it is surely more prudent to render just their meaning, than to plant out, in a new and foreign soil, the corresponding words that one might, with some pains, discover in the unspoiled speech of Yorkshire or of Devon.

But it would be pedantic to stand longer between the reader and old Etienne Dupardeau, the hemp-beater. Let him begin.

H. M.

*May*, 1928.

# LITTLE FADETTE

## I

BARBEAU OF LA COSSE was prospering well enough, as you might know from his being one of the municipal council of his commune. He had two fields. They yielded him food enough for his family, and a profit into the bargain. In his meadowland he gathered his full cartloads of hay ; and except down on the edge of the stream, where it was just a little spoilt by the reeds, his fodder was known in the district to be the best quality.

Barbeau's house was well built, and roofed with tiles. It stood pleasantly on the slope of the hill, and had a fruitful garden, and a vineyard of six full acres. Behind the barn, moreover, he had a fine orchard, an *ouche*, as we say hereabouts, with abundance of fruit—plums and black cherries, pears and sorb-apples. And the nut-trees that edged it round were in keeping, the oldest and largest for two good leagues around.

Barbeau was a stout-hearted and good-natured man. His first thought was always for his own family, but that never made him unfair to his neighbours or the folk of the parish.

He already had three children ; but Mother Barbeau no doubt saw that he had wealth enough for five, and that she had better make haste if the years were not to catch her up, and so thought fit to present him with two at one time, two fine boys. They were so much alike as to be almost indistinguishable, and it was seen at once that they were two *bessons*, as we say of twins whose likeness to each other is perfect.

Old Mother Sagette received them into her apron when they came into the world. She did not forget to scratch a tiny cross on the arm of the first-comer with her needle, because, as she said, mistakes can easily happen with a bit of ribbon or a necklace, and then your first-born will lose his rights. She also said that when the child was stronger, he should be marked in some way that could not be effaced ; and this was duly done. The elder was named Sylvain, which soon became Sylvinet, to distinguish him from his elder brother, who had stood as godfather ; the younger was called Landry, and kept this name as it was given him at baptism, because his uncle, who was his godfather, had ever since boyhood been known as Landriche.

Barbeau himself was a trifle surprised when he came home from market to find two tiny heads in the cradle.

" Oho ! " said he, " this cradle's going to be too narrow. To-morrow morning I'll have to widen it."

He was something of a carpenter in his way, though untaught, and had made quite half of his own furniture. He showed no further surprise, but proceeded to tend his wife, who drank a large glass of hot wine and was all the better for it.

"You're such a fine worker, goodwife," he said to her, "that that's bound to hearten me. Here we are with two more little ones to feed, and we weren't in any great need of that. There'll be no resting for me now from working our fields and rearing our beasts. But be easy in your mind. The work will be done. Only, don't give me three next time: that would be too much."

But Mother Barbeau began to cry, greatly to her husband's distress.

"Gently, gently!" he said. "Don't take it to heart, goodwife. I didn't say that in reproach. Quite the contrary, I meant it for thanks. They're fine well-made children, these two, and very pleased I am with them."

"Oh dear, oh dear!" said his wife. "I know you don't mean to reproach me with them, goodman. But I'm worried, I am, because they say that there's nothing so chancy or so troublesome as rearing twins. They harm each other, and almost always one of them has to die before the other will thrive."

"Come, come!" said their father, "You don't believe that? I don't know, of course: they're the first twins that ever I saw. It's no

common case. But here's Mother Sagette, who is learned in this thing. She will tell us how much there is in it."

Mother Sagette was appealed to.

"Trust what I say," she answered. "These twins will both live as well as you could wish. They won't be ill more than any other children. I've been a midwife now for fifty years, and I have seen every child in this canton born, and live its life, or die. So it isn't the first time I have had twins in my hands. Now understand, the likeness has nothing to do with their health. Some of them are no more alike than you and I; and it often happens that one is strong and the other feeble, so of course one lives and the other dies. But just look at yours—each of them as fine and well built up as if he was an only son! That shows they have not done each other any harm in their mother's womb. They came nicely, both of them, without hurting her overmuch, and without hurting themselves either. They're as pretty as could be, and full of life too. So have no fears, Mother Barbeau: you'll take pleasure in seeing them grow. And if they go on as they are, it will only be you and those who see them every day who will be able to tell them apart, for never have I seen twins so very like. Two little partridges, you might say, coming out of the egg: so pretty and so much alike that only the hen-bird could know them."

"Good enough!" said Barbeau, scratching his head. "But I have heard tell that twins will

grow so fond of each other that they could not live when once parted, and that one of them, if not both, will pine away with sorrow, and even die of it."

"True," said Mother Sagette, "perfectly true. But hark to what a woman of experience is going to tell you. Don't go forgetting it now, for by the time these children are old enough to be leaving you, I dare say I shan't be in the land of the living and here to advise you. Take care, Barbeau, when these twins of yours begin to be aware of themselves, not to leave them always together. Take one of them to work with you while the other stops at home. When one goes fishing, send the other out with the gun; when one is watching the sheep, let the other go and mind the oxen at pasture; when you give one of them wine to drink, give the other a glass of water, and the other way round. Don't scold them or punish them both at once. Don't dress them alike: if one is to have a hat, let the other have a cap, and see especially that their blouses are not the same colour. In fact, prevent them, by all the means you can imagine, from confusing themselves together and from being used never to be parted from each other. Now, I am afraid that all I say may just go in at one ear and out at the other: but if you don't do these things, a day will come when you'll rue it sorely."

Mother Sagette spoke words of wisdom, and they believed her. They promised to do as

she said, and made her a handsome present before sending her home. And then, as she had strongly advised that the twins should not be suckled with the same milk, enquiries were speedily made after a wet-nurse.

But none was to be found in the neighbourhood. Mother Barbeau had not counted on having two children and had nursed all the others herself anyway, and thus had taken no steps in advance. So Barbeau had to set out to look further afield, and in the meanwhile, as she could not let her little ones suffer, she gave them the breast, both without distinction.

People in our countryside do not make up their minds quickly, and however rich you may be, you must always chaffer a little over a bargain. It was known that the Barbeaus could afford to pay, and it was thought that the mother could not manage to keep two nurslings without tiring herself, for she was no longer in her first youth. So all the nurses that Barbeau managed to find asked him eighteen livres a month, neither more nor less than from the gentry.

Barbeau's idea had been to give only twelve or fifteen, and he reckoned that a good sum for a peasant. He hurried everywhere, argued a little, but settled nothing. The matter was not very urgent: two children so young as these could not tire the mother out, and they were thriving so well and quietly, with so little squalling, that the pair of them made hardly more trouble in the house than one. When one slept,

the other slept too. Their father had altered the cradle, and when they both cried at once, they were both rocked and soothed together.

In the end Barbeau did come to an arrangement with a wet-nurse for fifteen livres, and he was holding back only over a question of five francs' pin-money, when his wife said to him :

" Pooh, goodman ! I don't see why we are going to spend a hundred and eighty to two hundred livres a year, as if we were gentlefolk, and as if I were past the age to nurse my own children. I have more milk than I need for it. They're a month old already, these boys of ours, and just look if they aren't in fine trim ! And think of this Merlaude woman you want to give one of them as nurse—she is not half so strong and healthy as I am : her milk is already eighteen months old, and that's not what is wanted for such a young baby. It's quite true that Mother Sagette told us not to nurse our twins with the same milk, so as to keep them from becoming too fond of each other : but didn't she also say that they must be looked after with equal care, because after all twins are not quite so sturdy as other children ? I'd rather ours were too fond of each other than that one should have to be sacrificed to the other. And then, which of the two are we to give to the nurse ? I own I should be as heartsore at parting with one as with the other. I can honestly say that I have loved all of my children, but somehow or other I have the feeling that these are

the dearest and nicest I have held in my arms. There's something that makes me always frightened of losing them, I don't know what. I beg you, my dear, put this nurse out of your mind. We shall do everything else that Mother Sagette advised. How do you suppose that babes at the breast will become over-fond of each other, when the most they can do at weaning-time is to know their fingers from their toes?"

"True enough, goodwife," answered Barbeau, looking at his wife: she was still uncommonly fresh and sturdy. "But supposing on the other hand that your health were to decline as the children grew bigger?"

"Have no fear," said his spouse. "I feel my appetite as keen as if I were fifteen. What's more, if I did feel that I was being tired, I promise I should not hide it from you, and there would still be time to put one of them out to nurse."

And Barbeau yielded, the more readily as he had no mind to engage in useless expense. Mother Barbeau nursed her twins, uncomplaining and unaffected, and even proved to have such a fine constitution that, two years after weaning her youngest, she brought into the world a pretty little girl, who was called Nanette, and whom she likewise nursed herself. But it was a little too much, and she might have had difficulty in carrying it through had not her eldest daughter, who was herself a mother for the first time, relieved her from time to time, giving her breast to her little sister.

In this way did the whole family grow up; and soon it was all swarming in the sunshine, little uncles and little aunts with little nephews and little nieces, and none of them could be said to be much more noisy or much more sensible than any of the others.

## II

THE twins continued to grow, at their ease, and without more troubles than other children. What is more, so gentle and well-disposed were they by temperament, that they did not seem to suffer from teething or from their growth so much as the rest of these little people.

They were fair, and remained fair throughout their lives. They had a robust air, with large blue eyes, well-shaped shoulders, and erect, strongly-set bodies. They were taller and more forward than any of their age, and all the folk from round about passing through the village of La Cosse, would stop to look at them, wondering at their resemblance, and would move on, saying "A fine pair of lads, all the same."

Thus from an early age the twins were used to being examined and questioned, and did not turn shamefaced and awkward as they grew up. They were quite at their ease with everybody, and instead of hiding behind the bushes, as the children hereabouts do when they spy a stranger, they would look the first-comer straight in the face, though always modestly, and answer all that they were asked, neither shamefacedly nor reluctantly. At a first glance there was no

difference to be seen between them ; they seemed as like as two peas. But when you had observed them for a few minutes, you would see that Landry was a shade taller and stronger, that he had slightly thicker hair, a bolder nose and a livelier eye. Also, his forehead was broader and his mien more decisive. Moreover, a mark which his brother had on the right cheek, he had on the left, and much more pronounced. So the neighbours were able to distinguish them quite well ; but all the same, it needed a moment or two, and in the dusk or at a little way off, nearly everybody made mistakes, the more so as the twins had exactly the same voice, and, knowing very well that they could be mistaken for each other, they used to answer in each other's name without troubling to warn you of your mistake. Even their father himself sometimes fell into the trap. It was only their mother, as the old midwife had foretold, who never made mistakes, whether in complete darkness, or as far off as she could see them coming or hear them talking.

In fact, they were identical, and though Landry might have a hint more of gaiety and courage than his elder brother, yet Sylvinet had such friendliness and fineness of temper that you could not have liked him less than his younger. During three months an attempt was made to prevent them from becoming too much accustomed to each other. Three months is a long time, in the country, to observe something

contrary to custom. But on the one hand, no great result could be seen to come of it ; and on the other, the village priest had said that Mother Sagette was full of old wives' tales, and that what a wise God had placed in the laws of Nature could not be displaced by mere men. The result was that all the promises were gradually forgotten. The first time that their baby clothes were taken off for them to be taken to Mass in breeches, they were clothed in the same stuff, for it was a skirt of their mother's that served for both garments ; and the cut was the same, for it was the only one the village tailor knew.

In due course it was noticed that their taste in colour was the same. When their Aunt Rosette wanted to make them each a New Year's gift of a necktie, they both chose the same lilac necktie from the pedlar who hawked his haberdashery from door to door on the back of his Percheron horse. Their aunt asked them if that were because of their fancy for being dressed exactly alike. But the twins did not seek so far for an explanation. Sylvinet answered that it was the prettiest colour and the prettiest pattern for a necktie in all the pedlar's pack, and Landry added his assurance that all the other neckties were hideous.

"And the colour of my horse?" said the pedlar, with a smile. "What do you think of that?"

"Very ugly," said Landry. "It is like an old magpie."

"Terribly ugly," said Sylvinet. "A draggle-tailed magpie at that."

"You see that," said the pedlar to their aunt, with a judicial air. "These children have the same sight. If one of them sees red as yellow, immediately the other will see yellow as red; and they must not be thwarted in such a thing, because, you know, if you try to prevent twins from regarding themselves as two prints of one and the same design, they just become idiots and don't know what they are talking about."

This the pedlar said because his lilac neckties were a bad dye, and he was anxious to sell two of them at once.

Time passed, and things all went on in the same way. So much alike were the twins dressed, that there was still more often reason for confounding them. And, whether from childish mischief, or from the workings of that law of nature which the Curé had thought it impossible to unmake, it always happened that when one of them had cracked the toe of his sabot, the other very quickly split his, and on the same foot. When one tore his vest or cap, the other reproduced the rent so well that you would have thought the same accident had caused it. And then—laughter and slyly innocent looks from the twins, when they were asked for an account of what had happened!

For better or worse, their fondness kept increasing with their years, and when they could reason a little, these two realised that

they could not find amusement with other children unless they were both together. Their father had tried to keep one of them with him throughout one day, while the other stayed with his mother; but so downcast and pale were they both, and so little heart did they show for work, that they were thought to be ill. And when they came together again in the evening, they both made off along the road hand in hand, and were loath to come home, so happy were they to be together; besides, they felt some grudge against their parents for having inflicted this pain on them.

Hardly ever again was another attempt begun: for it must be said that their father and mother, and no less their uncles and aunts, brothers and sisters, had a fondness for the twins that inclined almost to weakness. They were proud of it, by reason of the compliments paid them on the boys' account, and also because they really were a couple of children who were neither plain, nor stupid, nor naughty. From time to time Barbeau used to feel some concern over what would come of this continual dependence when they reached manhood, and remembering old Mother Sagette's words, he would try teasing them to stir up some jealousy between them. If they had committed some small fault, he would, for instance, tweak Sylvinet's ear and say to Landry, "I excuse you this time, Landry, because generally you're the more sensible." But Sylvinet was merely consoled for his stinging ear

by thus seeing Landry spared, and it was Landry who wept as if he himself had received the punishment. Then again, they tried giving to one only something that both of them desired. But if it were something good to eat, they forthwith shared it—and if it were some toy or trinket for their use, they would just use it in common, or pass it to and fro between themselves without distinction of mine and thine. If one of them were complimented on his behaviour in such a way as to seem unjust to the other, the other was only proud and happy at seeing his twin fondled and encouraged, and began to flatter and fondle him likewise. In fact, it was waste of time to seek to part them, body or soul. Nobody likes to thwart, even for their own good, children who are held dear, and so things were soon allowed to drift as God willed ; or else, the teasing was turned into a game. But the game never deceived the twins themselves. They were very sly, and sometimes, for the sake of being left in peace, they would pretend to quarrel and fight. But they were only play-acting, and were careful, roll upon each other as they might, not to do each other the slightest harm. And if some bystander showed surprise at seeing them thus at loggerheads, they would hide and laugh at him, and you could hear them chattering and chirruping like a couple of blackbirds on a bough.

In spite of this great resemblance and this strong inclination, it turned out to be the will of

God, who has fashioned no two things on earth or in heaven absolutely alike, that their lots should be different. And it was then that they were seen to be two creatures distinct in the divine idea of things, and different in their own temperament.

This was seen only when a trial was made, and this trial came about after they had made their first Communion together. Barbeau's family was increasing, thanks to his two eldest daughters, who were not slow in bringing fine babes into the world. His eldest son, Martin, a decent, strapping lad, had found work elsewhere. His sons-in-law were not idle, but work was not always plentiful. We had had a succession of bad years in our part of the country, due as much to damage from storms as to the straits of trade, and those years forced more good gold out of the country-folks' pockets than they put into them again. Whence it came that Barbeau had not the means to keep all his tribe with him, and had perforce to think of putting his twins into service under another roof. Old Caillaud of La Priche offered to take one off his hands to goad his oxen, for he had a wide tract to farm and his own boys were all either too old or too young for the job. Mother Barbeau was sadly startled and put out when her husband first spoke of it. One might have thought that she had never foreseen that this was bound to happen one day to her twin boys, and yet she had been worried by that thought

all their life long ; but being always submissive to her husband, she could not say a word. Their father was concerned also on their account, and laid his trail from afar. Just at first the twins wept and wept, and spent three whole days out in the woods and fields, never being seen except at meal-times. They said not a word to their parents, and when asked if they had decided to submit, answered nothing. But between themselves they argued it out at length.

The first day they could neither of them do anything but bewail their lot, keeping arm-in-arm as if afraid of being parted by sheer force. But their father would not have done that. He had a peasant's wisdom, which is made up half of patience, half of trust in the power of time. Next day too, when the twins realised that they were not being bullied, and that it was taken for granted that they would see reason, they were more awed by the paternal will than they would ever have been by threats or penalties.

" All the same," said Landry, " we must lay our own plans, and see which of us is to be the one to go. For the choice has been left to us, and old Caillaud has said that he cannot take both of us."

" What can it matter to me whether I go or whether I stay, if we really have to be parted ? " said Sylvinet. " I'm not just thinking of having to go and live somewhere else. If I were going

with you, I should grow used to being away from home."

"That's what they say," Landry went on. "And yet the one who stays with our parents will certainly be better off; he won't suffer so much as the one who will never again see his twin, or his father, or his mother, his garden, his animals, everything he usually enjoys."

Landry spoke firmly enough. But Sylvinet only wept afresh; for he had less grit than his brother, and the idea of losing all and leaving everything behind him at one time pained him so deeply that now he could set no check on his tears.

Landry wept too, but neither so much nor in the same way. For his thought was always to shoulder the greater part of the burthen himself, and he wanted to see how much his brother could bear so that he might spare him the rest. He knew well that Sylvinet was more afraid than he was of going to live in a strange place and making one of a family other than his own.

"Listen, Sylvinet," said he. "If we can decide on being separated, it is better that I should be the one to go. You know quite well that I'm a bit stronger than you. When we are ill—and that nearly always happens to us both at the same time—the fever is always harder on you than on me. They say we shall perhaps die if we're parted. Well, I don't believe I shall die; but I shouldn't answer for you, and that's why I'd like to think of you being with our mother.

She will comfort you and look after you. And indeed, if there's any difference made between us at all, and there's very little, I think it is you who are the favourite. You are the nicest and the fondest, I know that. So you stay, and I'll go. We shan't be very far from each other. Caillaud's land touches ours, and we'll see each other every day. I like hard work, myself. It will distract me. And I run better than you do, so I can come faster and see you as soon as my day's work is done. You won't have very much to do, so you can walk round and see me at my work. I shall be much easier in my mind about you than if you were away from home and me still there. So, for that reason, I ask you to stay."

## III

SYLVINET would not hear of it. Although he was more tenderly devoted to his parents, and to his little sister Nanette than Landry was, he dreaded leaving the troublesome part to his beloved twin.

At last, when they had thrashed out the whole question from start to finish, they took straws and drew lots. It fell to Landry. But Sylvinet was not satisfied with the trial and wanted to tempt fortune once again, this time by tossing a penny for heads or tails. Three times it came down tails for Sylvinet, and still it was Landry who had to go.

"So you see that's how fate wills it," said Landry, "and you know that one should never fly in the face of fate."

Three days later Sylvinet was still weeping bitterly, but Landry's eyes were almost dry. At first the thought of having to go away from home had perhaps been harder for Landry to bear than for his brother, because he had been surer of his own courage, and had been quite alive to the hopelessness of trying to oppose his parents' will. But so often did Landry go over his misfortunes in his mind, that its edge soon became dulled and he was able to consider

things more sensibly. Sylvinet, on the other hand, by dint of bewailing his lot, had never had the courage to reason with himself. So much so, that when Landry was already quite resolved to leave, Sylvinet was not yet prepared to see him go.

Landry, again, had rather more self-respect than his brother. The twins had always heard so much of how they would grow up to be only half a man if they could not grow used to parting from one another that Landry, who was beginning to be proudly conscious of his fourteen years, was eager to prove that he was no longer a child. He had always been the first to persuade and to lead his brother ever since the time when they had first gone off hunting for birds' nests, in the forks of trees, right to the present day. And so on this occasion too he succeeded in calming him. When they came home in the evening, Landry told his father that they were ready to bow to their duty, that they had drawn lots, and that it was he, Landry, who should go to mind the big oxen at La Priche.

Then Barbeau drew his twin sons on to his knees, although they were by now strong, well-grown lads, and spoke to them in this manner:

"My boys, your obedience shows me that you have come now to years of discretion, and I am well pleased. Remember that when a child is pleasing to his father and mother, he is pleasing to God in Heaven as well. And sooner or later God will reward him. I know not which of

you it was who yielded first, but God knows, and He will bless him for having spoken well, as He will bless the other for having hearkened to His word."

With that he led the twins to their mother, that she might say a kind word to them ; but Mother Barbeau found it so hard to restrain her tears that she could not utter a word, and had to be content with kissing them fondly.

Barbeau, who was far from being dull-witted, knew well enough which of the two was the more courageous, and which the more clinging. He was anxious not to let Sylvinet's good resolutions grow cold, for he could see that Landry, for his own part, was quite resolved, and that one thing only, his brother's grief, could make him waver. So he went to rouse Landry before dawn, taking great care not to disturb the other brother, who lay asleep by his side.

" Come along, youngster," he whispered. " We must be setting off for La Priche before your mother has time to see you : we must spare her the pain of farewells, for you know how unhappy she is. I am going to take you to your new master and carry your bundle for you."

" Mayn't I say good-bye to Sylvinet ? " asked Landry. " He'll bear me a grudge if I slip away without telling him."

" If your brother wakes and sees you going off, your own distress will make him weep all the more. Come, Landry, you've a kind heart, and you wouldn't like to make your mother ill.

Do your duty right to the end, my son. Leave as though nothing were happening. This very evening, no later, I shall bring your brother to see you, and as to-morrow is Sunday, you'll be able to come over and see your mother some time during the day."

Landry obeyed bravely, and crossed the threshold without turning to look back. But Mother Barbeau was not so sound asleep nor so carefree that she could not hear every word that her husband had been saying to Landry. The poor woman realised the good sense of her husband's remarks, and did not stir, except to lift the curtain of her bed just enough to see Landry as he went out. Her heart was so full that she threw herself to the foot of the bed, making as if to go and embrace him ; but she stopped short when she reached the twins' bed. There Sylvinet was still lying in a deep sleep. The poor lad had cried so much for three days, and for the best part of three nights, that he was quite worn out and was even showing signs of feverishness, for he tossed and turned on his pillow with sighs and groans, yet could not rouse himself.

Mother Barbeau contemplated the only twin left to her and could not but admit to herself that she would part from him with an even heavier heart. True, Sylvinet was the more tender of the pair, either by reason of a weaker temperament, or because God has decreed by the laws of nature that when two beings love one another, whether it be the love of friendship

or the love of man and woman, the love of one is always deeper than that of the other. Barbeau was if anything a trifle fonder of Landry because he laid more store by courage and hard work than by caresses and endearments. But Sylvinet, with his grace and his winning ways, had more of his mother's affection.

So there she stood gazing at the unfortunate boy, so pale and woe-begone, and told herself that it would be a thousand pities to send him away to work as yet, that her Landry had more mettle to withstand such trials, and that his love for his mother and his twin did not trouble him enough to endanger his health. He was a lad with a high ideal of duty, she thought; but all the same, his heart must be a little hard, or he could not have left without hesitating, and without so much as one backward glance or one little tear. "He could not have taken a single step on his way," she reflected, "without falling on his knees, and imploring God to give him strength. And he would have come to my bed where I lay pretending to be asleep, were it only to take one look at me, and kiss the hem of my curtain. My Landry, to be sure, is a real boy. He only asks to be alive, to be active, to work, and to roam. But my other boy's heart is like a girl's, so gentle and tender that one can't help loving him like the apple of one's eye."

Whilst Mother Barbeau was pondering thus on her way back to bed, where she could sleep

no longer, Barbeau was leading Landry across the fields and meadows towards La Priche. When they stood at the top of the little rise which blotted out the buildings of La Cosse as soon as one dropped down its further side, Landry stopped. He looked back. His heart was so heavy that he could go no further, and he sat down amongst the bracken. His father walked on ahead, pretending not to notice, but after a few minutes he called to him very kindly and said :

" Look, day is breaking already, Landry, my boy. We must make haste if we're to arrive before the sun is up."

Landry stood up. And as he had vowed he would not let his father see him cry, he forced back the big tears that were welling into his eyes. He made as if his knife had dropped out of his pocket, and reached La Priche without showing his distress, but none the less it was very great.

## IV

OLD Caillaud saw that it was the stronger and more diligent of the twins who had been brought to him, and was very pleased to welcome the lad. He knew quite well that the decision could not have been made without pain, and being a decent man and a good neighbour, a close friend of Barbeau's, he did his best to encourage and hearten the boy.

He sent at once for some soup and a mouthful of wine to put heart into him, for it was easy to see that his grief was sore. Then he took him along to yoke the oxen, and showed him how he liked that done. Landry, as it happened, was no novice in this work, for his own father had a fine pair of oxen which he had often harnessed and handled wonderfully well. As soon as the boy saw Caillaud's stout oxen, the best-kept, best-fed, best-bred in all the countryside, he felt his pride aglow at having such noble cattle at the end of his goad. And he was delighted to show that he was neither awkward nor timid, and had nothing new to learn. His father made a point of showing off his points, and when the time came for going out to the fields, all the Caillaud children, boys and girls, big and small, came

to kiss the twin. The youngest of them tied a sprig of flowers with ribbons to his hat, because this was his first day at work, and a day to be celebrated by the family who were taking him in. Before leaving him, his father admonished him in the presence of the farmer, bidding him satisfy his new master in everything, and to tend his cattle as carefully as if they were his very own.

On that score Landry promised to do his best, and went off to the ploughing. There, he put a good face on things, and worked well too throughout the day, and came back to the house with a good appetite ; for it was his first day of toil as hard as this, and a little fatigue is a sovereign remedy against heartbreak.

But the day had been harder to pass for poor Sylvinet, over at the Bessonière : for you must know that Barbeau's house and property at La Cosse had come to be so called since the birth of the two children, and also because a short time afterwards a servant of the house had given birth to a pair of twin girls, who had not lived. The peasantry are always giving playful nicknames, and so house and land had received this name of " La Bessonière " ; and wherever Landry and Sylvinet were seen, the children would always gather round and shout, " Here are the *bessons* of the Bessonière ! "

Well, there was great sadness that day at Barbeau's Bessonière. When Sylvinet woke up and saw no sign of his brother by his side, he

knew what had happened; but he could not believe that Landry could have gone off like that without saying good-bye. He felt angry with him, even in his sorrow.

"What have I done?" he said to his mother. "How can I have vexed him? I have always yielded in everything he advised me to do. He told me not to cry in front of you, mother darling, and so I kept back my tears until my head seemed to be bursting. He promised that he wouldn't go away without saying something again to hearten me; and he was going to eat his dinner with me at the end of the Chenevière, at the place where we always used to go and talk and play, the pair of us. I wanted to pack his bundle for him, and to give him my knife, for it's better than his. So you must have made up his bundle last night without telling me, mother? And you knew that he wanted to go off without saying good-bye to me?"

"I did your father's will," answered Mother Barbeau.

And she said all she could think of to comfort him. But he would listen to nothing; and not until he saw that she was in tears also, did he turn and kiss her, asking pardon for having added to her own sorrow, and promising to stay with her to make amends. But no sooner had she left him to attend to the poultry and the washing than he set off running in the direction of La Priche, not thinking whither he was going, but just carried along by his instinct, like a

pigeon speeding after his mate without thought of the road to be followed.

He would have reached La Priche, had he not met his father, who was on his way back. He took the boy's hand to lead him home, saying :

" We shall go this evening. But you mustn't go and distract your brother while he's working : his master would not be pleased. Besides, our own goodwife is in trouble, and it is you I am counting on to comfort her."

## V

WHEN Sylvinet came back he clung to his mother's skirts like a little child. All day he stayed with her, talking always of Landry, unable to stop thinking of him, and visiting every spot and corner that they used to visit together. In the evening he went to La Priche with his father, who wanted to accompany him. Sylvinet was wild with the desire to go and embrace his twin, and had not been able to eat any supper, such was his haste to be off. He was sure that Landry would come part of the way to meet him, and kept fancying that he saw him running in his direction. But although Landry would have been eager to do so, he did not stir. He was afraid of being laughed at by the young people and the boys at La Priche on the score of this twin-brotherly fondness, which was regarded almost as an affliction ; and so Sylvinet found him at table, eating and drinking as if he had been with the Caillaud family all his life.

Nevertheless, when Landry saw him coming in his heart leapt for joy, and had he not restrained himself, he would have overturned table and bench to embrace him the sooner. But he dared not, because his masters were eyeing him with curiosity : it amused them to see in

this fondness a real novelty, and, as the local schoolmaster used to say, a "phenomenon of nature."

And when Sylvinet rushed at him, kissing him tearfully, and pressing against him as a bird nestles against its mate for warmth, Landry was vexed on account of the others, though he could not help being pleased on his own account. But he was anxious to appear more sensible than his brother, and signed to him now and again to mind his behaviour, greatly to Sylvinet's surprise and distress. Then, when Barbeau had settled down to chat and drink a glass or two with Caillaud, the twins slipped out together, for Landry was eager enough to caress his brother lovingly so long as it were privately. But the other lads watched them at a distance; and then little Solange, old Caillaud's youngest daughter, inquisitive and mischievous as a linnet, followed them on tiptoe right into the clump of hazel-trees. She laughed sheepishly when they pointed at her; but she did not give an inch, for she was convinced that she was going to see something peculiar, although what there was to be surprised at in the affection of two brothers she did not know.

Sylvinet, though surprised at the calmness of his brother's greeting, had no thoughts of reproach, so delighted was he at being in his company. Next day Landry felt that he was his own master, for Caillaud had told him he was free of all work, and he set off so early in

the morning that he expected to surprise his brother still in bed. But although Sylvinet was the sounder sleeper of the pair, he woke up the moment Landry passed the orchard gate, and ran out barefoot as if something had told him that his brother was hard by. For Landry it was a day of pure delight. It was a joy to see his family and his home again, since he knew that he would not be coming back there every day, and that it would be a kind of reward for him. Sylvinet forgot all his sorrow until the day was half spent. At breakfast he had told himself that he would be having dinner with his brother ; but when dinner was over, he reflected that supper would be the last meal, and began to feel restless and ill at ease. He petted his brother and looked after his needs to his heart's desire, giving him the best of everything on the table, the crust of his bread and the heart of his lettuce. He grew concerned, too, over Landry's clothing and his boots, as if he had some distant journey to make, and were greatly to be pitied—never thinking that of the two he himself was the more to be pitied, because he was the more sorely stricken.

## VI

THE week wore on in the same way. Sylvinet went to see Landry every day, and Landry lingered with him for a moment or two when he came over in the Bessonière direction. Landry accepted his lot more and more fully ; Sylvinet accepted it not at all, but counted the days and hours like a soul in torment.

Nobody in the world save Landry could make his brother listen to reason. It was on him that their mother fell back to induce Sylvinet to calm himself, for the poor child's distress was waxing greater every day. He no longer played, and he worked only when bidden. He still took his little sister out for walks, but hardly spoke to her and never thought of amusing her, only watching to save her from falling or coming to any harm. As soon as he was unobserved he went off alone and hid himself, so well that nobody knew where he could be found. He would go into all the ditches and recesses and gullies where he had been used to playing and talking with Landry ; he would sit on the roots where they had sat together, and dabble his feet in all the trickles of water where they had

splashed about like a pair of ducklings. He was overjoyed when he found therein some pieces of stick which Landry had whittled with his pruning-knife, or some pebbles he had used as quoits or for striking sparks. He gathered them up and hid them in a hole in a tree or beneath a row of peas, where he could find them and gaze on them from time to time as if they had been things of great import. Continually he was recollecting things, and racking his brains for every tiny memory of his past happiness ; to another, they would have appeared meaningless ; to him, they were everything. He took no stock of the future, being afraid to think of a succession of days like those he was now enduring. His thoughts were only of the past, and he ate his heart out in an endless day-dreaming.

There were times when he imagined that he saw and heard his twin, and talked all alone, thinking that he was answering him. Or he would fall asleep just where he was, and dream of him, weeping when he awoke and found himself alone, reckless of his tears and stemming them not at all, because he hoped that the very excess of fatigue would wear down and vanquish his pain.

Once, when he had wandered as far as the top of the clearings of Champeaux, he found on the rivulet which runs out of the wood there in rainy weather, now almost quite dried up, one of those little mills that our country children make with twigs, so neatly adjusted that they

turn under the running water, and will remain sometimes for a very long time, until some other children break them or a flood sweeps them away. The one which Sylvinet found had been there, whole and untouched, for two months and more ; the spot was lonely, and nobody had seen it or injured it. Sylvinet recognised it as his twin's work. When they made it, they had promised to come back and see it ; but it had passed out of their minds, and since then they had made lots of other mills in other places.

It was a great joy for Sylvinet to find it again, and he carried it a little further down, to a place where the stream had water in it, so as to see it turning and to recall Landry's amusement in giving it its first start. Then he left it, looking forward to bringing Landry there the next Sunday and showing him how their mill had stood, how solid and well-made it was.

But he could not resist coming back alone the next day. He found the edge of the rivulet all trampled and disturbed by the feet of cattle coming there to drink, having been put to graze in the clearing that morning. He moved forward a little, and saw that the beasts had trampled on his mill and crushed it so completely that hardly a piece of it could be found. He felt sore at heart, and imagined then that some disaster must have overtaken his brother that day ; and he ran all the way to La Priche to make sure that he was all right. But he had noticed that Landry

did not like to see him coming during hours of work, as he was afraid of vexing his master by allowing himself to be distracted ; so he contented himself with watching from a distance while Landry worked, and did not show himself. He would have been ashamed to own to the idea that had driven him there, and went back again without saying a word, and without mentioning it to anybody until long afterwards.

But he grew paler, slept badly, and hardly ate at all, at which his mother was much distressed, knowing not how to comfort him. She tried taking him with her to market, or sending him to the cattle fairs with his father or his uncles. But he cared for nothing and found amusement in nothing, and Barbeau, without telling him, tried to persuade Caillaud to take both of the twins into his service. But Caillaud answered him with one argument that he felt was reasonable :

" Supposing I did take them both for a while, that couldn't last for where one servant may be needed, folks like us have no need of two. At the end of a year you would still have to hire out one of them somewhere else. And don't you see that if Sylvinet were in some place where he was forced to work, he would not brood so much, and would behave just like the other, who's taken to his work bravely ? Sooner or later it must come to that. Pehaps you won't be able to place them just where you would like, and if these boys have to be further away from

each other still, and see each other only from week to week, or month to month, it is worth while to begin getting them used to not being always in each other's pockets. So be reasonable about it, friend, and don't pay so much heed to the fancies of a child who's had too much attention and too much wheedling from your wife and your other children. The worst is over ; you can be sure of his growing used to the rest if you do not yield now."

Barbeau gave in, and recognised that the more Sylvinet saw of his twin, the more he yearned to see him. And he resolved that when St. John's Day came round again, he would try to hire him out, in the hope that if he saw less and less of Landry, he would finally adapt himself to a normal way of life, and not let himself be overwhelmed by an affection that was turning into fever and languor.

But nothing of this must as yet be said to Mother Barbeau, for the first hint brought forth all her tears. Sylvinet, she declared, was quite likely to die. And Barbeau was sadly embarrassed.

Landry, advised by his father and his master, and by his mother too, made a point of reasoning with his hapless brother ; but Sylvinet did not resist, promised everything and could not master himself. In all his sorrow there was something else that he did not mention, because he could not put it into words : the truth was that a terrible jealousy in Landry's regard had taken root

deep in his heart. He was pleased, more so than he had ever been, to see that everyone held Landry in high esteem, and that his new masters treated him as kindly as if he had been a child of the house. But although that rejoiced him in one way, it was matter for pain and rankling to see Landry making, as he thought, too ready a response to these new friendships. It was intolerable that one word of summons from old Caillaud, however kindly and patiently given, would bring him running quicker than his own will, leaving father, mother and brother behind, more afraid of failing in his duty than his affection, and far prompter to obedience than Sylvinet would have felt capable of showing himself when it was a question of lingering a few moments longer with the object of so faithful a love.

And then the poor boy admitted to his mind a care which previously he had not felt—a sense that he was alone in his love, that his fondness was poorly requited ; that this must have been so all the time without his recognising it ; or else, that for some time now his twin's affection had grown cold, because he had met people elsewhere who suited him better and pleased him more.

## VII

LANDRY could not divine this jealousy of his brother's; for his own nature had never made him feel jealous of anything in all his life. When Sylvinet came to see him at La Priche, Landry would seek to distract him by taking him out to see the great oxen, the fine cows, the immense flocks of sheep, and the heavy crops of the Caillaud farm. For Landry held all these things in high esteem, not from any envy, but just from the taste that he had for work on the land, for the rearing of stock, for all that was admirable in country things. He took pleasure in seeing the filly he led out to the pasture, clean, sleek and gleaming; he could not bear the humblest piece of work to be scamped, nor to see anything that could live and be fruitful, abandoned, neglected, and as it were despised: were they not the gifts of God Himself? But Sylvinet viewed all this with indifference, and was astonished that his brother should take so much to heart things that to him were as nought. He was suspicious of everything and said to Landry:

"Here you are, all taken up with these great oxen here. You have no thought now for our own little bull-calves, so lively and yet so nice

and gentle with us both that they used to let themselves be yoked by us more readily than by our father. You haven't even asked news of our own cow. She gives such good milk, and looks at me with such a sad look, poor beast, when I give her her fodder, just as if she understood I was all alone, and wanted to ask me where the other twin was."

"Yes, she's a good beast," said Landry. "But just look at those at this farm! You'll see them milked, and never in your life will you have seen so much at one milking!"

"I dare say," Sylvinet went on. "But I'll wager it isn't such good milk and cream as old Brownie's milk and cream, for the grass at the Bessonière is better than it is here."

"The deuce it is!" said Landry. "I think our father would be very glad all the same to exchange, if he were given Caillaud's fine hay for his own reed-beds at the water's edge!"

"Pooh!" continued Sylvinet, shrugging his shoulders. "There are trees down amongst the reeds finer than any of yours. And though the hay may be scarce, it's fine, and when it's carted in, it leaves a scent like balm all along the road."

And on they went, arguing like this about nothing. For Landry was convinced that the finest possession is what one actually has, while Sylvinet had no thought for possessions at all, his own or his neighbours', and despised everything that pertained to La Priche. But beneath all these words in the air, one could see here the

lad who was content to work and live, no matter where or how, and there, the one who could not understand how his brother could enjoy one instant's happiness or peace of mind apart from him.

Landry, perhaps, would take him into his master's garden, and would break off his talk with him to cut a dead branch on a grafted tree, or pull up some weed that was choking the vegetables. And it would annoy Sylvinet that he should always have this idea of order and usefulness to someone else, instead of being, as he was, awake to the slightest breath, the smallest word, of his own brother. He showed no sign of it, because he was ashamed of feeling so easily pained ; but on leaving Landry, he would often say to him :

"Well now, you've had enough of me for to-day. Perhaps too much of me : the time may be dragging for you with me here."

Landry could not understand these reproaches. They hurt him, and he in his turn reproached his brother with them, but Sylvinet would not or could not explain himself.

And if the poor lad was jealous of Landry's most trifling concerns, he was still more so of the persons to whom Landry showed his attachment. It was intolerable to him that Landry should be comradely and good-tempered with the other youngsters at La Priche ; and when he saw him taking care of little Solange, fondling her or playing with her, he reproached

him with having forgotten his little sister Nanette, who, he said, was a hundred times nicer and prettier and more lovable than that ugly little girl there.

But when one's heart is a prey to jealousy, one can never be truly fair, and so, when Landry came to the Bessonière, he seemed to Sylvinet to pay far too much attention to his little sister. Sylvinet reproached him for paying heed to nobody but her, and only showing boredom and indifference towards himself.

His affection, in fact, became gradually so exigent and his mood such a sorry one, that Landry began to find it irksome, and to feel glad enough that he did not see him too often. He was a little tired of hearing nothing but reproaches for having accepted his lot as he had done, and one might have said that Sylvinet would have been less wretched if he could have made his brother less unhappy than himself. Landry understood, and wanted to make him realise that affection, if it be very great, can sometimes become an evil. But Sylvinet would have none of it, and even regarded his brother's suggestion as very cruel. So much so, that he began occasionally to sulk, and would let whole weeks pass without going to La Priche, although he was eating his heart out to go there, but holding himself back, and letting pride enter where no trace of it had ever entered before.

Words followed words, and irritation followed irritation, until Sylvinet took in bad part all the

most sensible and honest things that Landry could say to restore his spirits. And such spite did poor Sylvinet come to feel at last, that for a moment he thought that he hated the object of this great love of his, and one Sunday left the house so as not to have to spend the day with his brother, who, in spite of everything, had never once failed to come there.

This childish naughtiness hurt Landry sorely. He liked pleasure and excitement, for every day he was growing stronger and more independent. In all games he was the winner, the quickest with hand and eye. So it was some sacrifice that he made to his brother, to leave all the merry youngsters at La Priche every Sunday, to come and spend the whole day at home ; for there he could not broach to Sylvinet any idea of going to amuse themselves on the village square at La Cosse, or even of going for an aimless walk.

No, Sylvinet had remained much more of a child in body and mind than his brother had, and had only one idea—to love him and him only, and to be loved likewise, and his wish was always that Landry should accompany him alone to *their* places, as he called them : that is, to the nooks and crannies where once they had amused themselves with games which they were now too old for—making little wicker wheelbarrows, or little mills, or gins to ensnare little birds ; or perhaps laying out houses with pebbles, or those fields as big as a handkerchief,

which children pretend to till in different ways, imitating on a small scale what they see done in ploughing and sowing, harrowing and reaping, and thus teach one another in the space of an hour all the work and tillage and harvests which the earth receives and yields in the round of the four seasons.

These games were no longer to Landry's taste. He was now performing or helping to perform the process on the real scale, and much preferred to drive six oxen harnessed to a great cart than to fix a little contraption of twigs to his dog's tail. He would have liked to go and try his strength with the stout lads of the place, and play skittles, now that he had become handy with the big ball and could make it roll just right at thirty yards. When Sylvinet did consent to go there, he stood in a corner without saying a word, instead of taking part in the game, ready at once to be impatient and vexed if Landry seemed to get too much pleasure and excitement from the play.

Then, again, Landry had learned to dance at La Priche. The taste for this had come to him late in the day, because Sylvinet had never had it, but already he was dancing just as well as those who take to it as soon as they can walk. At La Priche he was reckoned a good bourrée dancer, and although he did not yet actually enjoy kissing his partners, as is the custom with each dance, still he was pleased enough to kiss them, for that seemed to be bringing him out

of the childish estate. He would even have liked them to make a little fuss about it, as they did with the men. But of this they showed no sign as yet ; in fact, the older ones even laughed as they put their arms round his neck. And that annoyed him a little.

Once Sylvinet had seen him dancing. It had caused one of his worst outbreaks of spite. So furious had he felt at seeing him embracing one of Caillaud's girls, that he had wept tears of jealousy and called the whole thing indecent and ungodly.

And so it may be guessed that whenever Landry sacrificed his amusement to his brother's affection, he did not spend a very entertaining Sunday. But he had never missed one, thinking that Sylvinet would bear him a grudge, and not regretting a shade of annoyance in the idea of giving his brother a pleasure.

And so when he saw that his brother, who had bickered with him during the week, had now left the house so as not to make his peace, he felt riled in his turn. For the first time since leaving his family he wept wholeheartedly, and hid himself, ashamed as always of letting his parents see his sorrow, and afraid of increasing any they themselves might feel.

If anyone had reason for jealousy, Landry would have been more entitled to it than Sylvinet. Sylvinet was his mother's favourite, and Barbeau too, although he had a secret preference for Landry, showed Sylvinet more kindness and

thoughtfulness. The poor boy was neither so sturdy nor so reasonable, and he was also more spoiled ; they were more afraid of causing him pain. His was the more fortunate lot, for he was with his own family, and for his sake his twin had faced absence and its pangs.

For the first time good Landry argued thus, and came to the conclusion that his brother was totally unfair to him. Until now his goodness of heart had kept him from blaming Sylvinet, and rather than accuse him, he had inwardly taken the guilt upon himself : he was too full of health, he told himself, and was over-ardent at work and at play ; he could not speak words so kind, nor think of so many delicate attentions as his brother could. But on this occasion he could not lay a finger on any sin of his against affection : for in order that he could come that day, he had given up a splendid cray-fishing expedition which the youngsters at La Priche had been planning all the week, whereat they had held out promises of great enjoyment if he would consent to join them. It was a great temptation that he had resisted : and this, at his age, was no small matter. After much weeping he checked himself, listening to someone who was also crying, quite close to him, and talking to herself, as country women will when they have some great sorrow. Landry quickly recognised his mother, and ran up to her.

" Alack, alack ! " she kept saying between her sobs. " Why must that child bring so much

care to my heart? He will be the death of me, as sure as sure!"

"Oh, mother!" exclaimed Landry, throwing his arms round her neck. "Is it I who bring care to your heart? If it is, punish me, and don't weep! I don't know how I can have vexed you, but I ask your pardon all the same."

And with that the mother saw that Landry was not the hard-hearted boy she had often imagined. She clasped him tight and told him, almost without realising it, such was her distress, that it was Sylvinet of whom she complained; that as for him, she had sometimes harboured unjust notions but she would make amends for that; and that Sylvinet seemed to her to be going out of his mind, and she was worried because he had gone off, before daybreak, without a bite of food. The sun was sinking, and there was no sign of his return. He had been seen at noon on the river-bank. Mother Barbeau was afraid he might have thrown himself into the water to make an end of his life.

## VIII

THIS idea that Sylvinet might possibly have wanted to destroy himself passed from the mother's head into Landry's as easily as a fly into a spider's web. Hurriedly he set about hunting for his brother. His sorrow was keen as he ran, and he said to himself, "My mother, maybe, was right to blame me for being hard-hearted. But now Sylvinet must really have been very sick at heart to hurt our poor mother and myself like this."

He ran in every direction, but could not find him ; he called him, with no reply ; he asked everybody, but no one could give any news of him. At last he found himself at the top of the meadow where the reeds grew and entered it, remembering that down there was a place of which Sylvinet was particularly fond. This was a great gash which the river had made in the earth, where it had uprooted two or three alders ; they had remained lying across the water, their roots in the air. Barbeau had not wanted to remove them. He had sacrificed them because, from they way they had fallen, they still gripped the earth that remained caught in great clots amongst their roots. And that was very useful, for every winter the water did a lot of damage amongst

his rushes and every year consumed a slice of his meadow.

So Landry approached "the gash" (as his brother and he used always to call this spot amongst their reeds). He did not waste time in coming right round to the corner where they themselves had made a little staircase with turfs, supported on stones and the roots that projected from the ground and gave off new shoots. He jumped down from as high as he could, to reach the bottom of the gash as quickly as possible, because on top of the river bank there so many branches and grasses reached above his head that if his brother had been there he could not have seen him without going right in.

And he went in, full of excitement, for his head was still full of the idea his mother had given voice to, that Sylvinet must surely have wanted to end his life. He pushed to and fro through all the foliage, and beat through all the undergrowth, calling for Sylvinet and whistling for the dog which had doubtless followed him: for the dog had not been seen at home all day any more than his young master.

But Landry called and sought in vain. He found himself alone in the gash. But being a lad who did nothing by halves, and took note of everything that might be of help, he examined all the length of the banks for some trace of a footprint, or some small landslip that was not ordinarily there. It was a melancholy and likewise an embarrassing search, for it was about a

month since Landry had seen the place, and although he knew the spot as well as his own hand, there was every possibility of some small change having taken place in it. The right bank was entirely covered with turf, and down in the gash itself the reeds and horse-tail weeds had grown so thick in the sand that no corner could be seen large enough for a footprint to be looked for. However, by dint of going over and over the ground, Landry found at one end a trace of the dog, and even a place where Finot, or some other dog of the same size, had lain curled up.

That left him wondering, and again he examined the steep bank above the water. He fancied he could see a fresh scar in the soil, such as someone might make with his foot in jumping off or letting himself slide ; and although it was far from unmistakable, for it might just as well have been the work of one of the big water-rats that go foraging and burrowing and gnawing in such places, he was so much pained that his legs gave way under him, and he fell on his knees, as if commending himself to God.

And thus he remained for a little while, with neither strength nor courage to go and tell someone what was causing him this agony of mind, watching the river with tear-brimmed eyes, as if he would fain ask it to tell what it had done with his brother.

And meanwhile the river flowed peacefully on, toying with the hanging branches that dipped into it along the banks, and slipping away through

the field with a little murmur that was like someone very quietly laughing and mocking.

Poor Landry was quite overwhelmed by his notion of disaster, so much so that he lost his head and, from a trifling sign that might easily betoken nothing at all, he constructed something beyond the help of God or man.

" This wicked river says never a word to me," he reflected. " It would leave me to weep for a whole year without giving me back my brother. Its deepest spot is just here, and so many dead trees have fallen there since it began to damage the meadow, that nobody who got into it could ever get out. Oh God ! Can my poor twin really be there, right at the bottom of the water ! Lying within an arm's length, and yet I cannot see him or recover him amongst the branches and the reeds, even if I did try to go down to him ! "

And with that he began to bewail his brother and reproach him : never in his life had he felt such sorrow as this.

At last he had the idea of going to consult a widow woman whom they called Mother Fadet. She lived right at the end of the beds of rushes, hard by the road running down to the ford. This woman had neither land nor other possessions beyond her little garden and her little house : but nevertheless she was not hard put to it to find her livelihood, by reason of the great knowledge she had of the evils and hurts of this world. People came from all parts to consult her. She used to bandage *in the secret*

*way :* that is to say, she would cure wounds and sprains and other disablements by means of *the secret.* She imposed on people somewhat, for she relieved you of afflictions you had never had, such as your stomach coming unhooked, or the falling of the coat of the belly ; and for my own part, I have never entirely believed in all these disasters, any more than I attach great faith to the allegation that she could make the milk of a good cow pass into the udders of a bad one, however old and ill-nourished the latter.

But there were good remedies that she knew, and applied, for the cooling of the body ; there were sovereign plasters that she put on cuts or burns ; there were drinks that she made up to deal with fevers. And so far as these were concerned, she earned her money well, and cured many sick folk whom the doctors would have killed if their remedies had been tried. So, at least, she said. And those whom she had saved greatly preferred believing her than taking any risks with doctors.

In the country no one can ever be learned without being in some degree a sorcerer. Accordingly, it was widely believed that Mother Fadet knew a great deal more than she cared to tell, and she was supposed to have the power of discovering objects, and even persons, that had been lost. Indeed, from the fact that she had ingenuity and skill in helping to extricate you from distress in sundry possible circumstances, it

was inferred that she could do the same in impossible circumstances.

Children are eager to listen to all kinds of stories, and Landry had heard them saying at La Priche, where people are notoriously credulous and more simple-minded that at La Cosse, that Mother Fadet, by means of a certain grain which she flung in the water, saying certain words the while, could bring about the finding of the body of a drowned man. The grain would float up and flow along with the water, and wherever it was seen to stop, there you were sure to find the hapless corpse. There are many who believe that consecrated bread has this same virtue, and there are few mills that do not always keep some of it to this end. But Landry had none ; Mother Fadet lived just beside the rushes ; and grief does not induce to reasoning.

So off he went, running to Mother Fadet's dwelling, and telling her his trouble, and begging her to come along to the gash with him, so as to try with her secret to let him find his brother, alive or dead.

But Mother Fadet, who did not like to find herself outstripped by her own reputation, and did not readily display her powers for nothing, made mock of him, and even sent him packing rather roughly. She was displeased because, in days gone by, they had employed Mother Sagette instead of herself for women in childbed up at the Bessonière.

Landry, who was rather proud by nature,

would perhaps have complained or been angry at any other time ; but so overwhelmed was he that he said not a word, and turned back towards the gash, his mind made up to enter the water himself although he had not yet learned to dive or to swim. But, walking along with downcast head and eyes fixed on the ground, he felt a tap on his shoulder, and turning round, he saw Mother Fadet's granddaughter. Little Fadette, she was called in the countryside, as much because it was her family name as because people liked to think that she too was something of a witch. You all know that the *fadet*, the pixie or the elf, is a very agreeable kind of sprite, but a little mischievous. And in our countryside the fairies, in whom people no longer believe, are also called *fades*. But whether Fadette meant a little fairy, or the female of the elf, everyone who saw her imagined that he saw a pixie creature, so tiny was she, and thin, and shockhaired and venturesome. She was a mocking chatterbox of a child, lively as a butterfly, inquisitive as a robin, black as a cricket.

And when I compare Little Fadette to a cricket, it amounts to saying that she was no beauty, for that poor little cricket of the fields is even uglier than that of the chimney-corner. Nevertheless, if you can remember in your childhood days having played with him and teased him and made him cry in your shoe, you are bound to know that his little face is not at all a foolish one, and makes one want to laugh rather than be angry.

Now, the children of La Cosse are no more stupid than other children, and like all others, they note resemblances and make comparisons. So they used to call little Fadette " the Cricket " when they wanted to annoy her ; and they sometimes called her so almost affectionately, for if they feared her malice a little, they did not hate her, because she told them all kinds of stories and was for ever teaching them new games which she had the wits to invent.

But all these names and nicknames of hers nearly made me forget the name she had been given at baptism, and which you might perhaps later be wanting to know. She was called Françoise ; and that is why her grandmother, who never liked changing names, always called her Fanchon.

For a long while there had been bad feeling between the Bessonière folks and Mother Fadet, and for that reason the twins had never spoken much with little Fadette. Nay, they had even kept their distance from her, and had never gladly played with her, nor with her little brother, " the Grasshopper," as he was called, who was always clinging to her side, angry when she ran without waiting for him, trying to throw stones at her when she laughed at him, enraged the more because he was not big, and enraging her more than she liked, for she was of a gay temper and ready to laugh at anything. But there were such notions in the air regarding Mother Fadet that certain children, notably the Barbeau family,

imagined that friendliness with the Cricket and Grasshopper would bring them bad luck. This did not prevent the twins from talking to them, for they felt no shame about it, and little Fadette never failed to greet "the *bessons* from the Bessonière" with all manner of tricks and jokes from as far off as she could see them coming.

## IX

POOR Landry turned round, a little annoyed at the touch he had just felt on his shoulder. And here he saw little Fadette, and not far behind Jeanet the Grasshopper hobbling along after her as his way was, for he had been lame and bandy-legged from his birth.

At first Landry thought to pay no heed and to walk straight on in the direction he was going, for he was in no mood for joking. But Fadette repeated the offence on the other shoulder and said to him:

"Oo-hoo! oo-hoo! There's an ugly twin for you! Half a boy who's lost his other half!"

Whereupon Landry, who was no more minded to be insulted than teased, turned yet again, and reached out with a blow of his fist at little Fadette. She would have felt it well enough had she not dodged aside, for the twin was close on fifteen and no weakling, while she, almost fourteen, was so slight and small that she would never have been taken for twelve, which was her age, and her appearance made one feel that the lightest touch would certainly shatter her.

But she was too knowing and alert to wait for blows, and what she lost in strength in fisticuffs, she made up in speed and trickery. So deftly did she jump aside that only a little more and Landry

would have landed his fist, and his nose too, on a stout tree that stood between them.

"Cricket, you wretched Cricket!" cried the poor twin to her, furious. "You must be heartless to come and annoy someone who is in trouble like I am. For a long time you've been baiting me with your cries of 'half a boy.' I've a good mind to-day to break you in four, you and your ugly little Grasshopper, just to see if the two of you would make a quarter of anything good!"

"Is that so, fair twin of the Bessonière, lord of the reed-beds at the riverbank?" answered little Fadette, still sniggering. "You're very foolish to get on the wrong side of me, considering that I was coming to give you news of your twin and tell you where you'll find him."

"Oh, that's different," Landry continued, very quickly appeased. "Tell me, if you know, Fadette, and I'll be very pleased."

"It isn't Fadette any more than Cricket who will want to satisfy you at this time of day," answered the girl in her turn. "You've said stupid things to me, and you'd hit me if you weren't so heavy and loutish. So go along and look for him yourself, your sot of a twin, since you're clever enough to find him for yourself!"

"I'm a fool to listen to you, creature!" said Landry at that, turning his back and starting off to walk again. "You don't know where my brother is any more than I do, and you're no

more clever in these things than your grandmother, and she's an old liar and good-for-nothing anyway."

But little Fadette, taking Grasshopper by the front leg—for he had managed to catch up and was clinging to her wretched skirts, always smeared with ashes—began to follow Landry, still giggling, and still telling him that without her he would never set eyes on his twin again. So much so that Landry, unable to get rid of her, and imagining that she or her grandmother would actually prevent him from finding Sylvinet through some sorcery, some intimacy with the river-sprite, decided to beat through the rushes and to go back home from there.

Fadette followed him as far as the slope of the meadow, and there, when he had climbed down, she perched herself like a magpie on the bar, crying out to him :

" Good-bye, then, lovely twin without a heart, who leaves his brother behind him ! It will be no good waiting for him for supper, you won't see him, either to-day or to-morrow. For where he is, he does not budge more than a stone, and there's a storm coming. There will be trees in the river again to-night, and the river will be carrying off Sylvinet so far, far, that you will never be seeing him again, never ! "

Landry listened to these evil words, almost in spite of himself. They put him in a cold sweat all over. He did not believe it absolutely, but the Fadet family was certainly reputed to have

dealings with the Devil—and who could be quite sure that there was nothing in it?

"Come on, Fanchon," said Landry, standing still, "are you going to leave me in peace, yes or no? Or tell me if you really do know something about my brother?"

"And what will you give me if I help you to find him before the rain starts falling?" said Fadette, standing erect on the bar of the stile, and waving her arms as if she wanted to fly away.

Landry knew not what he could promise her, and began to think she was trying to trick him to extract some money. But the wind soughing in the trees and the first rumblings of a thunderstorm threw a fever of dread into his blood. Not that he was afraid of the storm; but this storm had blown up so suddenly, and in a way that did not seem to him natural. Possibly, in the agony of his mind, Landry had not seen it coming up behind the trees along the river, especially as, after a couple of hours down at the bottom of the valley, he had only been able to see the sky on reaching the high ground again. But, in point of fact, he had noticed nothing of the storm until the moment that Fadette announced it. And forthwith the girl's skirts were blown out; her ugly black hair, escaping from that coif of hers, always loose on her head and askew over one ear, rose up like a crest; little Grasshopper's cap was blown off by a sudden gust of wind, and only by an effort did Landry save his own from flying away too.

And then in a couple of minutes the whole sky darkened ; Fadette, erect on the cross-bar, seemed twice her natural size ; and Landry, it must be admitted, was alarmed.

" Fanchon," he called to her, " I yield to you, if you yield up my brother. Perhaps you've seen him, perhaps you really know where he is. Be good ! I don't know what fun you can find in my misery. Be kind to me, do, and I'll believe that you're better than your words and your ways."

" And why should I be a good girl for you, eh ? " she went on. " Haven't you treated me badly without my ever doing you any harm ? Why should I show kindness to a pair of twins who're as proud as peacocks, who have never showed me the smallest kindness ? "

" Come, Fadette," Landry replied, " you want me to promise you something ? Tell me at once what you want, and I'll give it you. Do you want my new knife ? "

" Let's see it," said Fadette, jumping down beside him like a frog.

And when she had seen the knife, which was by no means bad, and for which Landry's godfather had paid ten sous at the last fair, she was tempted for a moment. But thinking it too trifling, she quickly asked if he would not rather give her his little white hen, no bigger than a pigeon and feathered right down over its claws.

" I can't promise you my white hen, because it is my mother's," said Landry in reply. " But

I'll promise to ask her for it ; and I don't think she'd refuse, because she would be so happy to see Sylvinet again that she'd grudge you no reward."

" Indeed ! " continued Fadette. " And suppose I had a hankering after your black-nosed goat, would Mother Barbeau be giving me that as well ? "

" Heavens, Fanchon ! What a time you take to make up your mind ! Look here : there's only one thing to be said. If my brother is in danger, and if you take me straight to wherever he is, there isn't one hen or chicken, goat or kid at our home that my father and mother would not be glad to give you as reward : of that I'm certain."

" Well, we'll see, Landry," said Little Fadette, stretching out her dry little hand for the twin to clasp to seal the bargain. He did not take it without a slight tremor, for at that instant her eyes were blazing so vividly that she might have truly been taken for a sprite. " I shan't say just now what I want—perhaps I don't know yet. But remember what you promise me now, and if you fail, I'll let everyone know that there's no trusting the word of the Landry twin. I'll say good-bye to you here. And don't forget that I shall ask nothing of you until the day I decide to come, and when I do ask something, it will be my command, and you must do it with no delay and no regrets."

" Right, Fadette : it's a promise ! It's

signed ! " said Landry, tapping the palm of her hand.

" Right ! " she said, with a very proud and pleased air. " Turn back to the edge of the river. Go down there until you hear bleating. You'll see a black lamb, and you'll see your brother at the same time. If it doesn't turn out just as I tell you, I free you from your promise."

Whereupon Cricket caught up Grasshopper under her arm, hardly heeding his protests and eel-like wrigglings, and leapt right into the midst of the bushes. Landry could see or hear nothing more of them ; they might have been a dream. He lost no time in wondering whether little Fadette had been fooling him, but ran without taking breath to the foot of the reeds, and bore along beside them as far as the gash. There he was just going to push further along without going down, for he had examined the place well enough to be sure that Sylvinet was certainly not there ; but just as he was going to move off he heard the bleat of a lamb.

" Lord God ! " he thought. " That girl foretold this. I hear the lamb, my brother is there. But dead or alive, I cannot tell."

And jumping into the gash, he entered the undergrowth. His brother was not there. But following the thread of the water ten paces further on, and still hearing the lamb bleating, Landry did see his brother. He was sitting on the other bank, with a little lamb held in his blouse, and the lamb, it was perfectly true, was

black in colour from the tip of its nose to the tip of its tail.

So Sylvinet was really alive, and seemed to be neither harmed nor torn in face or clothing. Landry was so relieved that he began inwardly thanking God, without a thought of asking His pardon for having had recourse to the skill of the Devil to obtain this happiness. But just when he was going to call Sylvinet, who had not yet seen him, and apparently did not hear him, on account of the great noise of the water tumbling over the stones, he stopped to observe him. For he was astounded to find him just as Fadette had foretold, right in the midst of trees tossed furiously by the wind, and motionless as a stone.

Yet everyone knows that it is dangerous to stay on the banks of our river with a big wind rising. These banks are all undermined, and every storm leaves behind it lots of uprooted alders, for unless these are very big and old, their roots are short, and they will fall across your body with no warning. But Sylvinet, though neither simpler nor more foolish than anyone else, seemed to take no count of the danger. He thought no more of it than if he were lying in the shelter of some good barn. He was worn out with the long day's haphazard running and wandering, and if by some lucky chance he had not actually drowned himself in the river, it could still be said that he had drowned himself in his grief and spite : for there he was, stock-still, his eyes fixed on the running stream,

his face pale as a water-lily, his mouth half open, like a little fish gaping in the sunlight, his hair dishevelled by the wind, and not even paying heed to his little lamb. He had taken pity on it when he found it strayed in the fields, and had picked it up in his blouse to carry it to its home; but as he wandered along, he had forgotten to ask whom it belonged to. And now he had it on his knees, letting it cry without hearing it, although the poor little thing bleated piteously, looking all round with its great clear eyes, astonished at not attracting the attention of any of its kind, and recognising neither its field nor its mother nor its shelter, in this shaggy, shadowy spot beside a rushing stream which, as likely as not, filled its heart with terror.

## X

IF Landry had not been separated from his brother by the stream, which is nowhere wider than four or five metres (as the new-fangled reckoning is), but at places is as deep as it is wide, he would no doubt have fallen on his brother's neck without a moment's reflection. But as Sylvinet did not even see him, he had time to wonder just how he ought to rouse him from his dreaming, and persuade him to come home ; for if the sulking boy, poor fellow, were not so minded, he could easily make off in another direction, and Landry would not readily have found a ford or a footbridge to rejoin him.

Landry thought for a moment. Then he wondered how his father would act at such a meeting, for his father had reason and prudence enough for four. And he wisely reflected that Barbeau would go about it very quietly and unconcernedly, so as not to show Sylvinet how much anxiety he had caused, and not to cause too great a feeling of contrition, and yet not encouraging him to behave likewise some other day that he might feel himself spited.

Accordingly, he began whistling as if calling the blackbirds to make them sing, as the shepherds do when they go through the woods at

nightfall. That made Sylvinet raise his head. The sight of his brother shamed him, and he rose quickly, thinking he had not been noticed. Landry pretended to have just noticed him, and without shouting very loud, for the noise of the stream was not great enough to prevent them hearing each other, he addressed him :

" Hello, Sylvinet ! Is that where you are ? I waited all morning for you. But seeing you were out so long, I walked down this way, waiting for supper. I knew I would find you home then. But as you're here, let's go back together. We'll go downstream, on either bank, and meet at the Roulettes ford."

(That was the ford close to Mother Fadet's house.)

" Off we go ! " said Sylvinet, picking up his lamb, for it had not known him very long and did not readily follow by itself. And they went off down the river, not daring to look at each other very often, for they were afraid of showing their pain at having been angry and the pleasure they felt at having found one another again. Now and then Landry would say a word to his brother as they walked, for he was still anxious to seem as if he did not believe in his brother's pique. He first asked him where he had found the lamb, and Sylvinet could not very well say, for he did not want to admit that he had been far afield and did not even know the names of the places he had passed through. Landry saw his embarrassment, and said :

"You can tell me later on; it's a high wind, and it's as well not to be underneath these trees along the water. But here's the rain beginning to fall, luckily, and the wind won't be long in dropping too."

And inwardly he said to himself, "It's quite true what Cricket said, that I'd find him before the rain came on. There's no doubt about it, that girl knows more about things than we do."

He did not reflect that he had spent a good quarter of an hour in explanations with Mother Fadet, he begging her to help him and she refusing to listen to him, and that little Fadette, whom he had only seen when he came out of the house, might very well have seen Sylvinet during this confabulation. At last this idea struck him. But how did she know so well what was troubling him when she accosted him, seeing that she had not been there during his explanations with the old woman? And this time he did not reflect that he had already asked several people for news of his brother on the way from the reed-beds, and that someone might well have spoken of it in front of Fadette; or perhaps that the girl might well have heard the end of his talk with her grandmother, hiding herself, as she often did, to find out everything that could satisfy her curiosity.

On his side poor Sylvinet was likewise turning over in his mind ways of explaining his bad behaviour towards his brother and his mother, for he had not expected Landry's pretence, and knew

not what story to tell him : for he had never lied in his life, and had never concealed anything from his twin.

So he was very ill at ease when he crossed the ford, having reached it without finding any way out of his embarrassment.

Once on the bank, Landry embraced him. And in spite of himself he did so even more wholeheartedly than usual ; but he refrained from questioning him, for he saw clearly that he would not be able to tell anything. He brought him home, talking of all kinds of things except those which lay nearest both their hearts. As they passed in front of Mother Fadet's house, he looked closely for a sign of little Fadette, and felt a desire to go and thank her. But the door was closed, and nothing could be heard but Grasshopper bawling because his grandmother had whipped him—as befell him every evening, whether he had deserved it or not.

It pained Sylvinet to hear the little rascal crying, and he said to his brother :

" That's a bad house : you always hear cries and blows coming from there. Grasshopper is as nasty and vexatious as could be, I know ; and as for Cricket, she's not worth a penny-piece. But they're unlucky, those children, not to have a father or mother, and being always dependent on that old witch. She's always up to some mischief, and does nothing for them."

" It's not like that in our house," answered Landry. " Never one blow have we had from

father or mother. Even when we were scolded for our childish mischief, it was done so gently and properly that the neighbours knew nothing of it. There are some people who are too fortunate, and don't know their advantages. And yet little Fadette, who's the unluckiest child in the world, and the worst-treated, is always laughing, and never says a complaining word."

Sylvinet felt the rebuke, and a pang of regret too for his fault. It was not the first he had felt since that morning. Twenty times he had longed to go back, but pride had held him. And now his heart was full to tears, and he wept in silence. But his brother took his hand.

"It's a heavy rain, Sylvinet," said he. "Let's get back home at a run."

And they began running, Landry trying to make Sylvinet laugh and Sylvinet forcing himself to do so just to please him.

When they were about to enter the house, however, Sylvinet felt a desire to hide himself in the barn, for he was afraid that his father might reproach him. But Barbeau took things less seriously than his wife; he contented himself with a joke or two, and Mother Barbeau, who had taken her husband's wise lesson, tried to hide the anguish she had suffered. But while she was busy drying her twins before a good fire, and giving them their supper, Sylvinet saw clearly that she had been weeping, and that every now and then she would watch him with a look of anxiety and distress. Alone with his

mother, he would have begged her pardon, and caressed her until she was consoled. But their father disliked any such foolish fondling, and as fatigue was overcoming him, Sylvinet had to go straight to bed after supper without saying anything. He had eaten nothing all day ; and no sooner had he swallowed his sorely needed supper than he felt as if he were drunk, and he had perforce to let himself be undressed and put to bed by his brother. Landry stayed by his side, seated on the edge of his bed, holding one hand in his own.

When he had watched him properly asleep, Landry took leave of his parents, not noticing that his mother embraced him with more affection than usual. He still believed that she could not love him so much as his brother, and felt no jealousy over it, just telling himself that he was less lovable and simply had his due. To that he bowed, out of respect for his mother as well as fondness for his twin, for Sylvinet, he believed, had more need than he of caressing and comforting.

Next day he ran to Mother Barbeau's bed before she had risen, and opening all his heart to her, made confession of his regrets and his shame. He told her how it was that he had felt so very unhappy for some time, no longer because he was parted from Landry, but because he imagined that Landry did not love him. And when his mother questioned him about this injustice, he was powerless to account for it, for it lay in

his heart like some sickness from which he could not save himself. The mother understood him better than she was willing to show, because a woman's heart is an easy victim to such pangs as these, and she herself had often felt a twinge at seeing Landry so calm in his courage and his good qualities. But now she saw that in every love jealousy is wrong, even in the loves that are God's most binding commands, and she took care not to encourage Sylvinet in his. She made him feel the pain he had caused his brother, and the great kindness his brother had shown in neither complaining nor showing his distress. Sylvinet saw it too, and agreed that his brother was a better Christian than he was. He vowed to mend his ways, and his desire to do so was sincere.

He had the air of being consoled and satisfied ; his mother, wiping away his tears, had answered all his plaints with heartening reasons ; he did all he could to act simply and fairly with his brother. But, none the less, against his own will, his heart harboured a germ of bitterness. "My brother," he reflected in spite of himself, "is the more Christian and the more just of us. My dear mother has said so, and that is the truth. But if he loved me as much as I love him, he could not submit in the way he does." And he thought of the calm, almost indifferent air that Landry had shown when he found him on the river-bank. He called to mind how he had heard him whistling to the blackbirds as

he hunted for him, just when he really was thinking of flinging himself into the river. For if he had not had this idea when he left the house, he had kept turning to it more than once as evening came on, thinking that his brother would never forgive him for having thus sulked and avoided him for the first time in his life. "If it had been he affronting me like that," he thought, "I should never have got over it. I'm very glad that he has forgiven me, but still I did not think he would do it so readily." Whereupon the unhappy boy sighed as he struggled with himself, and struggled while he sighed.

Nevertheless, God is our constant reward and help, however slight our good intentions of pleasing Him, so it turned out that Sylvinet was more sensible during the rest of that year. He refrained from quarrelling or sulking with his brother ; his affection for him became calmer ; and his health, which had suffered through all this anguish, was restored and strengthened. His father made him work more, finding that the less attention he paid to himself, the better he was. But the work one does with parents is never so exacting as that done at the bidding of other people, and during that year Landry, who did not spare himself, grew more in strength, as well as in stature, than his twin did. The small differences always observed between them grew more pronounced, and also passed from their temperaments to their features. After their

fifteen years were told, Landry showed himself a splendid lad, and Sylvinet remained a pretty youth, more slender, less highly coloured than his brother. Moreover, they were hardly ever mistaken for each other now, and although they still had a brotherly resemblance, they were no longer instantly spotted as twins. Landry, born an hour later than Sylvinet and counted as the younger, seemed, to those seeing him for the first time, to be the elder by a year or two. And that strengthened Barbeau's fondness for him : like a true countryman, he valued strength and stature above all else.

## XI

VERY soon after Landry's adventure with little Fadette, the lad began to feel concerned over the promise he had given her. At the moment when she had saved him from his anxiety, he would have pledged himself for both his father and his mother to give the very best that the Bessonière could provide. But when he saw that his father had not taken Sylvinet's sulking so very seriously, and had shown no anxiety, he was afraid that when Fadette came to claim her reward, his father would show her the door, and make light of her fine skill and the fine promises that Landry had made her.

This fear filled Landry with inward shame, and the further his grief receded, the more was he inclined to judge himself a simpleton at having imagined the hand of magic in what had befallen him. He could not be quite certain that little Fadette had been fooling him, but he felt there was good reason for doubt about it ; and he could think of no good reasons to give his father to prove himself justified in pledging himself so heavily. On the other hand, he did not see any more clearly how he could break such an

engagement, for he had pledged his word, and done so on soul and conscience.

But to his great astonishment, neither the day after the episode, nor in the next months, nor even the next few months, did he hear any word of little Fadette at the Bessonière or at La Priche. She made no appearance, either at Caillaud's to ask for a word with Landry, or at his father's to claim anything. And when Landry himself saw her far off in the fields, she did not go anywhere near him and seemed to take no heed of him. This was unusual for her, as she generally ran after everyone, whether to stare curiously, or to laugh and play and joke with the good-humoured, or to vex and make game of those who were otherwise.

But Mother Fadet's house was half-way between La Priche and La Cosse, so a day was bound to come when Landry would find himself face to face with little Fadette on some path or other, and when the path is narrow, one cannot but exchange a handshake or a word in passing.

And so one evening when Fadette was driving back her geese, with her Grasshopper at her heels as usual, and Landry had been to fetch the mares from the meadow and was quietly bringing them back to La Priche, they met in the little track that leads down from the Croix des Bossons to the ford of Roulettes. It runs between such steeply banked sides that a meeting cannot be avoided there. Landry blushed scarlet,

from his fear of her word of summons. And anxious not to encourage Fadette, he leapt astride one of the mares as soon as he saw her in the distance, and urged the beast with his sabots to take the trot. But all the mares were hobbled, and the one he had mounted went none the faster for his efforts. Finding himself quite close to Fadette, Landry did not dare look at her, and made as if to turn back and see whether the foals were following. When he looked forward again, Fadette had already passed him without saying a word. He did not even know whether she had looked at him, and whether with a glance or a laugh she had invited a good-evening from him. He only noticed that Grasshopper Jean, always hostile and mischievous, picked up a stone to throw at his mare's legs. He had a good mind to hit out with his whip at him, but was afraid of stopping and exchanging words with the sister. So he pretended not to notice and went on without looking behind.

Every other time that Landry and little Fadette met, the same thing happened, more or less. Gradually he became bolder in looking at her, for the older and more sensible he grew, the less was he worried by this trifling business. But when he was emboldened to look at her quite calmly, as if ready for anything she might want to say, he was astonished to see that the girl deliberately turned her head the other way, as if she were just as much afraid of him as he of

her. This completely restored his courage with himself, and his sense of justice made him wonder whether perhaps he had not been wrong in never thanking her for the delight which, by skill or by chance, she had given him. He resolved to hail her the first time he saw her, and when that moment came, he took at least ten paces in her direction to begin greeting her and chatting with her.

But on his approach little Fadette assumed a proud, almost vexed, air. Deciding at the last moment to look at him, she did so in such a scornful way that he was completely taken aback, and did not dare to address one word to her.

Landry did not see her again at close quarters that year. From that day onwards little Fadette, led by some inexplicable whim, avoided him so completely that as soon as she saw him in the distance she turned in a different direction, entered some enclosure, or gave him a wide berth so as not to see him. Landry thought she was annoyed by his ingratitude towards her, but his repugnance was so great that he could not resolve on any attempt at repairing his fault. Little Fadette was unlike other children. She was not naturally shy and distrustful; indeed, she was not shy enough, for she loved to provoke insults or jeers, so much did she enjoy feeling her tongue sharpened to answer them, and always having the last word and the most barbed. She had never been seen sulking, and

she was reproached for lacking the pride that is proper in a girl who is already fifteen or so and is beginning to feel herself somebody. She still had the manners of an urchin, to such an extent that she would often make a point of tormenting Sylvinet, upsetting him and driving him to distraction, when she surprised him in those day-dreams wherein he still sometimes forgot himself. She would always follow him along the road where she met him, jeering at his being a twin, and tormenting his very heart by telling him that Landry did not love him and was laughing at his griefs. And so poor Sylvinet, even readier than Landry to deem her a witch, was amazed by her reading of his thoughts, and very cordially detested her. He despised her and her family, and just as she avoided Landry, so he avoided the mischievous Cricket. Sooner or later, he used to say, she would follow in the footsteps of her mother, who had lived a loose life, deserted her husband, and in the end gone off after the soldiers. She had gone off as a camp-follower soon after Grasshopper's birth, and had never been heard of since. The husband had died of shame and chagrin, and for that reason old Mother Fadet had been obliged to take charge of the two children. She looked after them very badly, as much because of her stinginess as of her advanced age, which hardly allowed her to keep an eye on them and keep them properly looked after.

For all these reasons Landry, although he was not so proud as Sylvinet, felt disgusted by little Fadette ; and regretting that he had ever had relations with her, he took good care not to let anyone know of them. He even concealed the fact from his brother, reluctant to admit the anxiety he had felt on his account. And Sylvinet, on his side, said nothing of all Fadette's mischievousness towards him, being ashamed to own that she had divined his jealousy.

But time was passing. At the age our twins were now, weeks are like months, and months like years, as regards the changes they bring to body and mind. Very soon Landry forgot his adventure, and after some slight pangs at the memory of little Fadette, thought no more about it than if he had dreamed it.

And now about ten months had already gone by since Landry had gone to La Priche, and St. John's Day was drawing near. It was the term of his engagement with old Caillaud, and so pleased was this worthy man with him that he had quite made up his mind to raise Landry's wage rather than see him go. Nor did Landry ask anything better than to stay in the neighbourhood of his family and renew his bond with the folk at La Priche, who suited him very well. What's more, he could feel a growing fondness for a niece of Caillaud's, Madelon by name, and a fine slip of a girl. She was a year older than himself, and still treated him rather like a child. But that was lessening day by day. Early in

the year she had made fun of him when he blushed at kissing her in their games or dancing, but, by the end, she was blushing herself instead of provoking him, and no longer remained alone with him in stable or hay-loft. Madelon was by no means poor, and a marriage between them was certainly not impossible in the course of time. Both families were of good repute and highly esteemed in all the countryside. And after some time Caillaud, noticing these two young people beginning to seek each other and fear each other, remarked to Barbeau that they might well make a fine couple, and there was no harm in letting them have a long and close acquaintance.

Accordingly it was agreed, a week before St. John's Day, that Landry would stay on at La Priche, and Sylvinet with his parents. For the latter had recovered his good sense fairly well, and when Barbeau caught a fever, the lad was able to make himself very useful at work in his fields. Sylvinet had dreaded being sent off somewhere at a distance, and the fear had worked advantageously on him. For he strove harder and harder to overcome the excess of his fondness for Landry, or at least not to let it be too evident. So peace and contentment had returned to the Bessonière, although the *bessons* themselves only saw each other once or twice a week. St. John's was a day of happiness for them. Together they went to the town to see the hiring-fair for servants for town and country, and the fête that

follows on the main square. Landry danced more than one bourrée with the fair Madelon, and to please him, Sylvinet tried to dance also. He did not make much of it, but Madelon, who showed herself very well disposed towards him, took his hand opposite him to help him to keep the beat. And Sylvinet, finding himself thus with his brother, promised to learn to dance properly, so as to share a pleasure in which hitherto he had been a hindrance to Landry.

Of Madelon he did not feel very jealous, because Landry was somewhat reserved with her. Besides, Madelon flattered and encouraged Sylvinet. She was unembarrassed with him, and anyone who did not know would have thought that of the two he was her preferred. Landry, indeed, might have felt jealousy, had he not been naturally a foe of the feeling ; and, perhaps, for all his innocence, something told him that Madelon was behaving thus only to please him and to ensure being more often in his company.

So everything went on for the best until the feast of St. Andoche, the patron saint of the village of La Cosse. This fell towards the end of September. It had always been a day of high festival for the twins, for there were dances and games of all kinds under the great nut-trees of the parish ; but it brought them new griefs for which they were quite unprepared.

Caillaud had given Landry leave to go and sleep the night before at the Bessonière, so that he could enjoy the festivities from the early

morning, and before supper the boy went off in high spirits at the prospect of surprising his brother, who did not expect him until next day. It was the time of year when days are beginning to shorten and nights falls quickly. Landry had never feared anything in broad daylight; but he would have been an exception amongst those of his age or his country if he had enjoyed finding himself alone at night on the roads, especially in autumn, a season when witches and goblins begin to enjoy themselves by reason of the mists that help them to conceal their tricks and spells. Landry was used to going out alone at any hour to take out his oxen or bring them in, and had no particular fear that night any more than another. But he walked fast and sang out loud, as is always done when the darkness is deep, for everyone knows that a man's singing will disturb and scatter evil beasts and evil folk.

When he was above the Roulettes ford, so called because of the quantity of rounded pebbles to be found there, he pulled up the legs of his trousers a little: for there might be water over the ankle, and he took care to walk straight ahead, because the ford is set at an angle, and there are nasty holes both to right and left. Landry knew the ford so well that he could hardly make a mistake. Moreover, through the half-stripped branches of the trees he could see the little gleam of light from Mother Fadet's house, and, looking at this gleam, and heading in

its direction, there was no chance of one's taking the wrong line.

But it was so dark under the trees that Landry felt the ford with his stick before stepping in. He was surprised to find more water than usual, the more so as he could hear the noise of the flood-gates, which had been open for a good hour. All the same, he could clearly see the light of Fadette's window, and he risked it. But a couple of paces brought him into water above his knees, and he stepped back, certain that he must be mistaken. He tried a little higher up and a little lower down. In both places he found the depth greater still. There had been no rain, the flood-gates were still roaring. It was a very surprising thing.

## XII

"I MUST have gone wrong and taken the cart-road," thought Landry, "for upon my word! I can see Fadette's candle on my right, and it ought to be on my left!"

He turned on his tracks up the road as far as the Croix-au-Lièvre, and went once round it with his eyes shut so as to lose his sense of direction; then, when he had properly observed the trees and bushes around him, he put himself on the right path and came back straight to the river. But although the ford seemed easy for him, he did not dare to take more than three steps in it, because suddenly he saw, almost behind him, the light from the Fadet house: it ought to have been right in front! He came back to land, and then the light seemed to be in its proper place. Again he took the ford, slanting at a different angle. This time he had water up to his waist. But he kept going forward nevertheless, supposing that he had happened upon a hole, but would get out of it if he headed for the light.

He did well to stop, for the hole was getting deeper all the time and he was up to his shoulders.

The water was very cold, and he stood for an instant wondering whether he would turn back the way he had come. The light seemed to have changed its position : nay more, he saw it shifting, running, jumping, passing from one bank to another, and in the end showing double, reflected in the water, where it stood like a bird hovering, making a faint singing sound like resin oil in a lamp.

And this time Landry felt afraid. He almost lost his nerve. For he had heard it said that there is nothing so deceitful and harmful than that fire, that it delighted in leading astray those who watched it, and in guiding them to the deepest places in the water, laughing after its fashion, and making mock of their anguish.

He shut his eyes so as not to see it, and turned quickly round in spite of the risk. He got out from the hole and found himself again on the bank. Then he flung himself on the grass and watched the sprite as it went on dancing and laughing. Truly it was an evil thing to see. Now it sped past like a kingfisher, now it vanished altogether. Another time it would become as big as a bullock's head, and then instantly as small as a cat's eye. It rushed up to where Landry was, and turned round him so fast that he was dazzled, and at last, seeing that he refused to follow it, the thing went back to frisk among the reeds, where it seemed to call out angry, jeering words to him.

Landry dared not move, for to turn on his tracks was not the way to put the will-o'-the-wisp to flight. It is known that it will persist in running after anyone who runs and flits across their path until they go mad and fall into some disaster. His teeth chattered with the cold and with fear, when he heard behind him a tiny, very quiet voice singing :

*Take up thy horn, my little sprite,*
*My elfin lad, take up thy light !*
*I bring my hood, I bring my cloak—*
*There's love among the fairy folk !*

And immediately little Fadette, who was gaily preparing to cross the stream, bumped against Landry where he sat on the ground in the dark. She stepped back, swearing neither more nor less than a boy, and a well-taught one too.

" It's I, Fanchon," said Landry, rising. " Don't be afraid. I'm no foe of yours."

He spoke thus because he was almost as much afraid of her as of the will-o'-the-wisp. He had heard her song, and saw that of course she was conjuring up the will-o'-the-wisp, which was dancing and whirling in front of her like a mad thing, and must have been a joy for her to see.

" I see well enough, my fine *besson*," said little Fadette after a moment's consideration, " that you're making up to me now because you're half-dead with fright : your voice is

trembling in your gullet, just as much as if you were with my grandmother. Come along, faint-heart, no one is so proud by night as by day, and I'll wager you won't dare cross the water without me."

"Upon my word, I've just come out of it," said Landry. "And just missed being drowned. Are you going to risk it, Fadette? Aren't you afraid of missing the ford?"

"And why should I miss it, pray? But I see well enough what's troubling you," answered Fadette with a laugh. "Come along: give me your hand, coward. The will-o'-the-wisp is not so mischievous as you think, he only harms you if you're afraid of him. I'm quite accustomed to seeing him. We know each other all right."

Whereupon, with more strength than Landry would have supposed she had, she drew him forward by the arm, and led him into the ford, running and singing:

*I bring my hood, I bring my cloak—*
*There's love among the fairy folk!*

Landry was hardly more comfortable in the company of the little witch than in that of the sprite. But preferring to see the Devil in the guise of a being of his own kind than as a tricky elusive fire like that, he did not resist; and he was soon reassured when he felt Fadette guiding him so well that he was walking dryshod on the

stones. But as they both moved quickly forward and set up a draught for the will-o'-the-wisp, they were still followed by this meteor, as our local schoolmaster calls it, a man deeply learned in these matters, who assures us that there is no need to be afraid of it.

## XIII

PERHAPS Mother Fadet also was well instructed therein, and had taught her grand-daughter not to be afraid of these night-fires. Or maybe the child had seen it so often—they were very often to be seen round the Roulettes ford, and it was only by chance that Landry had not seen it before at close quarters—that she had come to believe that the spirit which breathed them was not harmful and only wished her well. Feeling Landry trembling all over the nearer the flame came to him, she spoke :

" Silly boy," she said. " That fire don't burn. If you were clever enough to catch hold of it, you'd see that it doesn't even leave a mark."

" All the worse," thought Landry. " We know what sort of fire it is that doesn't burn. It cannot come from God, for God's fire is made for heating and burning."

But he did not disclose his thought to little Fadette, and when he found himself safe and sound on the bank, he had a good mind to leave her there and bolt for the Bessonière. But he was not ungrateful at heart, and did not want to leave her without thanks.

"That's the second time you've done me a service, Fanchon Fadet," he said to her. "And I'd be a poor fellow if I didn't tell you that I shall remember it all my life. I was like a fool there when you found me: the will-o'-the-wisp had bewitched me and left me silly. I should never have crossed the stream, or rather, I'd never have got out of it."

"Maybe you'd have got over it without any trouble or danger if you were not so foolish," said Fadette in answer. "I'd never have thought that a big lad like you, seventeen years old nearly, and with beard on your chin before long, would have been so easily scared, and very pleased I am to see you like that."

"And why are you pleased at that, Fanchon Fadet?"

"Because I bear you no love," she said in a scornful tone.

"And why do you bear me no love?"

"Because I don't bear you any respect," she answered. "Neither you nor your twin, nor your father and mother, who are proud because they're rich, and believe that doing them a service is only doing a duty. They have learnt to be ungrateful, and that is the ugliest fault in a man, next to being timid."

Landry felt very humiliated by the girl's reproaches, for he knew they were not altogether unmerited.

"If I have my faults, Fadette," said he, "put them down to myself only. Neither my

brother nor my father, nor my mother, nor anybody at home, know anything of the help you gave me once before. But this time they shall, and you shall have any reward you like."

"Oh, there's your pride again!" continued Fadette. "You imagine that you can pay your debts to me with your gifts. You think I'm like my grandmother, who will put up with everybody's dishonesty and insolence provided they fork out some money for her. Well, I have no need or desire for your presents. I despise anything that might come from you. For you haven't had the heart to find one small word of thanks and friendship to give me, and it's close on a year since I cured you of a great sorrow."

"I have my faults, I've admitted it, Fadette," said Landry, who could not help being surprised at the way he heard her arguing for the first time. "But the fault is yours also, a little. There was no magic in making me find my brother, because you had certainly just seen him while I was telling my story to your grandmother. And if you had been really kind-hearted, you who reproach me with cruelty, you would not have kept me waiting in agony, and you wouldn't have told me in words that might have led me a very long way: you would just have said at once, 'Go down the meadow and you'll see your brother at the edge of the stream.' It wouldn't have cost you much, instead of playing nasty

tricks with my distress. That's what lowered the price of the service you did me."

Little Fadette had her reply ready, but she remained thoughtful a moment. Then she said:

"I see you have done your best to banish gratitude from your heart; you try to fancy that you owed me none, on account of the reward that I asked the promise of. But your heart is bad and hard too; it never let you notice that I was claiming nothing from you, and was not even reproaching you for your ingratitude."

"True enough, Fanchon," said Landry, the soul of good faith. "I'm in the wrong. I've felt it, and I'm ashamed of it. I ought to have spoken to you. I did mean to, once, but you scowled so that I couldn't bring myself to do it."

"And if you had come the day after the business to say a friendly word to me, you would not have found me scowling. You would have known at once that I did not want any payment, and we should be friends. Instead of that, I have a bad opinion of you to this very hour, and I ought to have let you get out of your trouble with the will-o'-the-wisp as best you could. Good-night, Landry of the Bessonière. Go and dry your clothes. Go and tell your parents: 'If it hadn't been for that ragamuffin of a Cricket, I'd certainly have drunk my fill in the river to-night!'"

With these words, little Fadette turned her back on him and walked away towards her house, singing :

*" Take your pack and lesson in,*
*Landry Barbeau, handsome twin ! "*

And this time Landry felt something like true repentance in his soul. Not that he inclined to any sort of fondness for a girl who seemed to have more wits than heart, and whose ill manners were far from pleasing, even to those who found them amusing. But he had an upright heart, and did not want to carry a wrong on his conscience. He ran after her and caught her by her cloak.

" Look here, Fanchon Fadet," he said, " this business has got to be settled and finished between us. You are angry with me, and I'm not too well pleased with myself. You must tell me what you want, and I'll bring it you not later than to-morrow."

" All I want is never to see you again," answered Fadette very harshly. " And no matter what you may bring me, you can count on my throwing it in your face."

" Hard words for someone who is offering to make amends. If you don't want a present, perhaps there is some way of doing you a service and showing you that one wishes you well and not ill. Come now, tell me what I must do to please you."

"Well, you couldn't beg my pardon and ask me to be friends, could you?" said Fadette, stopping.

"Beg pardon, indeed: that's asking a lot!" answered Landry. He could not overcome his pride in relation to this girl; she had not the consideration her age now deserved, and did not always bear her years so wisely as she ought.

"As for your friendship, Fadette," he continued, "your temper is so queerly balanced that I could not put any great trust in that. So ask something that can be given you immediately, something I shan't be forced to take back."

"Very well," said Fadette in a clear, dry voice. "It shall be as you wish, twin Landry. I've offered you your pardon, and you wouldn't have it. So now I claim what you have promised me, and that is, to obey my command on the day that you are required to. Well, that day will be no later than to-morrow at the fête. And this is what I want: You shall dance three bourrées with me after Mass, two bourrées after Vespers, and two more bourrées after the Angelus. That will make seven. And through the whole day, from the time you rise until you go to bed again, you shall dance no other bourrée with anybody at all, woman or girl. If you don't do this, I shall know that there are three very ugly things in you: ingratitude, fear, and faithlessness. Good-night. I'll wait for you to-morrow to open the dance at the church door."

And little Fadette, whom Landry had followed right to her house, drew the latch and slipped in so quickly that the door was pushed to and fastened again before the lad could answer one word.

## XIV

JUST at first Landry thought Fadette's idea so ludicrous that he felt more inclined to laugh than to be annoyed. "This girl," he reflected, "is more crazed than bad, and more unselfish than you might think, for her payment will certainly not ruin my family." But thinking it over, he found the paying of his debt a harder business than it seemed. Little Fadette danced very well; he had seen her prancing in the fields or on the side of the road, with the shepherd-lads, and she bore herself like an elf, so sprightly that it was hard to keep time with her. But she was so far from being beautiful, and was so badly turned-out, even on a Sunday, that no boy of Landry's age would have made her his partner, least of all before spectators. The most that could be expected would be that the swineherds, or the lads who had not yet made their first Communion, might choose her to dance with; and certainly the beauties of the countryside did not like her to be in their round. So Landry felt himself utterly humiliated at being pledged to such a partner; and when he recalled that he had been made to promise at least three bourrées to the fair Madelon, he began to wonder how she would take this

affront that he would be forced to make her by not claiming them.

But he was cold and hungry, and in constant dread of seeing the will-o'-the-wisp after him again, so he walked along quickly without too much thought and without looking behind. Once home, he dried himself and told how he had not seen the crossing-place on account of the pitch darkness, and had been hard put to it to get out of the water. But he was ashamed to confess the fear he had experienced, and said not a word of the will-o'-the-wisp, nor of little Fadette. And he went to bed thinking that the morrow would be early enough to worry over the upshot of this unlucky encounter. But do what he might, he could not sleep properly. He had fifty dreams and more, in which he saw Fadette sitting astride the water-sprite, which was fashioned like a great red cock, with one claw holding its horn lanthorn, with a candle inside casting its rays right over the reed-beds. And then Fadette would change into a cricket as big as a goat, and her cricket's voice would cry out a song to him ; he could not understand it, but in it he heard words that rhymed, something to do with crickets and sprites and wills-o'-the-wisp and twins and Sylvinet. It left his head splitting, and the gleam of the dancing fire seemed so keen and quick that when he awoke he still had those little black, or red, or blue spots which seem to swim before our eyes after gazing too boldly on the orb of the sun or moon.

So tired out was Landry by this bad night that he slept right through Mass, and likewise heard not a word of the Curé's sermon, for all that he was praising and magnifying, as none could do better, the peculiar virtues of good Saint Andoche. Coming out of church, Landry was so heavy with fatigue that he had forgotten Fadette. But there she was in front of the porch, and just beside the fair Madelon, who was standing there in full confidence that the first invitation would be hers. But when he approached to speak to her, he could not help seeing the Cricket. And she took a step forward and said to him, with incomparable boldness :

" Come, Landry, you invited me to have the first dance last night. I count on our not missing it."

Landry blushed hot and scarlet, and seeing Madelon turn scarlet also, from her astonishment and vexation at such an incident, he plucked up his courage and faced Fadette.

" Possibly I may have promised you a dance, Cricket," he said to her, " but I had asked someone else before that, and your turn will come after I've kept my first promise."

" Not at all," answered Fadette, with assurance. " Your memory's at fault, Landry. You never promised anyone before me. The pledge I'm claiming dates from last year, you know, and you were only renewing it last night. If Madelon wants to dance with you to-day, your brother is over there : he's just like you and

she can take him in your place. One's as good as another."

"Cricket is right," said Madelon haughtily, taking Sylvinet's hand. "If you made a promise so long ago, you have to keep it, Landry. I'll dance with your brother just as willingly."

"Oh yes, it's all the same," said Sylvinet innocently. "We'll dance, all four of us."

They had of course to move away from there so as not to attract everybody's attention, and Cricket began the steps with such zest and speed that no bourrée was ever danced more firmly or with a finer swing. Had she been a spruce, pretty girl, she would have been a delight to behold, for she was a marvellous dancer, and every beauty there envied her lightness and poise. But poor Cricket was so badly dressed that she seemed ten times uglier than usual. Landry dared not look at Madelon, so vexed and humiliated did he feel in her regard. He looked at his partner, and thought her far uglier than in her everyday rags. She had thought to beautify herself, but her finery was simply a joke.

She had a sun-bonnet all yellow from long confinement, and instead of being small and well drawn up behind, as is the new fashion of the country, it showed a large flap on each side, very wide and very flat. At the back of her head the band fell down on to her neck, which gave her the look of her grandmother, and a head as big as a bushel on a small neck

as thin as a stick. Her drugget petticoat was too short by a couple of hands-breadths ; and as she had grown a lot during the year, her thin, sun-ravaged arms stuck out from her sleeves like two legs of a spider. But she had a flesh-pink apron of which she was very proud ; it had been her mother's, but she had not thought of taking off the upper part, which no girl of her age had worn for quite ten years back. She was far from being too much of a coquette, poor girl. She was not enough of one, indeed, for she lived like a boy, without thought for her looks, and fond of nothing but play and merrymaking. So she had the look of an old woman in her Sunday best, and was despised for her sorry get-up, which was not enforced by poverty, but by her grandmother's avarice and her own lack of taste.

## XV

SYLVINET found it strange that his twin should have taken a fancy for this Fadette: for his own part, he liked her even less than Landry did. And Landry did not know how to explain the matter, and would have been glad if the earth had opened and swallowed him up. Madelon was in high dudgeon, and for all the fire that Fadette kindled in their legs, their faces were so sad that you might have thought they were going to a burial.

Immediately after the first dance, Landry slipped away and hid in his orchard. But in a moment or two, Fadette came to keep him up to the mark. She was escorted by the Grasshopper, who, although he had a peacock feather and a gilt tassel in his cap, was more peevish and quarrelsome than usual, and she brought along a crowd of rowdy girls, younger than herself, for those of her own age would hardly have anything to do with her. When Landry saw her with this pack at her heels she counted on them as witnesses in case of his refusal; he surrendered, and led her out under the nut-trees. He would dearly have liked to find some corner there to dance with her unnoticed. Luckily for him, neither Madelon, nor Sylvinet,

nor any people of the neighbourhood were over there; and he wanted to profit by this opportunity to fulfil his task and dance his third bourrée with Fadette. There were only strangers around them, and these paid no particular attention.

As soon as it was over, he ran after Madelon to ask her to come and eat wheat-cake with him under the branches. But she had been dancing with others, who had made her promise to share their feasts, so she refused him rather haughtily. But then she saw that he was standing in one corner with his eyes full of tears, for pride and pique had made the girl prettier than he had ever seen her, and the fact might have been noticed by anyone. So she ate quickly, rose from the table, and said out loud:

"That's Vespers ringing. Who's dancing with me after them?"

She had turned in Landry's direction, counting on his answering "Me!" quickly. But before he could open his lips, others had offered, and Madelon, without deigning to give him one look of reproach or pity, went off to the service with her new gallants.

As soon as Vespers were sung, Madelon set off with Pierre Aubardeau, and followed by Jean Aladenise and Etienne Alaphilippe, and all three led her out to dance in succession—as was very likely, she being a handsome girl, and not undowered either. Landry watched her from the corner of his eye. Little Fadette had stayed

in church, praying long after the others, as she always did every Sunday—because she was very devout, as some said, or, as others would have it, so as to conceal better her commerce with the Evil One.

Landry was deeply hurt to see Madelon showing no concern on his behalf; she was pink as a strawberry with enjoyment, and amply consoling herself for the affront he had been forced to offer her. Then something occurred to him which hitherto had not entered his head, namely, that she might well have a good deal of coquetry in her, and that, in any case, she could have no great feeling of attachment for him, as she could amuse herself so well without him.

True, he knew that he was in the wrong, in appearances at least. But she had seen him sorely vexed there under the trees, and could very well have guessed that there was something beneath it which he would have liked to be able to explain to her. But she did not care a straw, and was merry as a grig, and all the while his own heart was breaking with sorrow.

When she had satisfied her three dancers, Landry approached her. He wanted a word with her in private, to justify himself as best he could. He did not know how to contrive to lead her aside, for he was still at an age when one is far from bold with women; what's more, he could find nothing suitable to say, and took her hand to make her follow. She addressed

him with an air of being half piqued, half forgiving :

" Oh ho, Landry ! So you're coming for a dance at the end ? "

" Not for a dance, no," he replied, incapable of pretence and no longer speechless, " just to tell you something that you cannot refuse to hear."

" Oh, if you've a secret to tell me, Landry, it must wait for some other time," replied Madelon, withdrawing her hand. " To-day's the day for dancing and diversion. My legs aren't dropping yet, but as Cricket has worn out yours, you can go to bed if you like. I'm staying on."

Whereupon she accepted Germain Audoux, who had come up and asked her to dance. And as she turned her back on Landry, he heard Germain Audoux say to her, referring to him :

" That lad seemed to think he would be getting his bourrée all right."

" Perhaps he did," said Madelon, tossing her head. " But it won't be coming his way yet ! "

Landry was sorely hurt at the words, and lingered near the dance to observe the charms of Madelon. They were not at all improper, but so haughty and defiant that he was piqued by them. When she came back beside him, he looked at her with eyes laughing at her a little, and in bravado she said to him :

" Well, Landry, you can't find a partner to-day ! You'll have to go back to your Cricket, my lad ! "

"And I'll go back to her with a very good will!" answered Landry. "She may not be the prettiest at the fête, but she's still the best dancer of you all."

Whereupon he went off towards the church to look for little Fadette, and brought her back to the dancing, right opposite where Madelon was, and danced two bourrées there without leaving the spot. Cricket's pride and delight were a sight to behold! She did not hide her pleasure, and threw up her little head and its great bonnet like a heavy-crested hen.

Unfortunately, however, her triumph annoyed a few of the yokels who were her usual partners. Out of the running now, though they had never been proud when with her, they had prized her highly for her dancing; and so now they began to criticise her, taunting her with her conceit and whispering round about her: "Just look at the Cricket who thinks she's captured Landry Barbeau! Cricket, grasshopper, clod-hopper, cloghopper," and so on in their rustic mode of jesting.

## XVI

AND then, when little Fadette passed round close to them, they tugged at her sleeve, or thrust forward their feet to trip her up; and some of them—the youngest and most boorish, let it be said—struck the flaps of her bonnet and pushed it over from one ear to the other, shouting:

"What a beehive! Look at Mother Fadet's beehive!"

Poor Cricket hit out five or six blows to right and left, but only succeeded in drawing attention to herself. People standing round about began to talk.

"Look at our little Cricket," they said. "She's in luck to-day, with Landry Barbeau dancing her all the time. Yes, she dances well enough, look at her trying to be a fine girl and strutting like a peacock."

And to Landry some of them said:

"Has she put a spell on you, Landry, that you've no eyes for anyone else? Or do you want to take to magic yourself? Are we going to see you soon out with the wolves in the fields?"

Landry was mortified. But Sylvinet, who saw his brother as all that was most excellent

and praiseworthy, was still more so at seeing him made such a laughing-stock, not only to so many local people but to strangers as well, who were starting to join them and ask questions, and saying, "Ay, he's a fine lad; but it's a queer thing all the same, to be showing himself with the ugliest girl in the whole crowd." And Madelon came too, and listened with a triumphant air to all this jesting, and very uncharitably threw in a word of her own.

"What can you expect?" she said. "Landry's still a child, and at his age, provided you can find someone to talk to, it doesn't matter whether it's got a goat's face or a Christian's."

Then Sylvinet took Landry's arm and whispered to him:

"Let's go away, brother, or we may be made angry. They're all laughing, and the insults they fling at Fadette hit you too. I don't know what has come over you to-day to dance with her four or five times on end. You must be looking for ridicule. Stop this game, I beg you. It's all right for her to expose herself to people's cruelty and scorn. She just looks for that, and has the taste for it. But it's not our taste. Come away; we'll come back after the Angelus, and you shall dance with Madelon. She is the right sort of girl. I always told you that you were too fond of dancing, and that it would lead you into some sort of folly."

Landry followed him for a few steps, but turned

round on hearing a great shout. He saw that Madelon and the other girls had surrendered little Fadette to the mocking of their swains, and that the yokels, encouraged by the laughter they raised, had just knocked her hat. The blow of a fist had done it. Fadette's long black hair was hanging down her back, and she was hitting out in her anger and grief. This time she had not said a word that merited this ill-treatment, and she was weeping with rage, unable to recover her bonnet, which one mischievous lout was bearing off on the end of a stick.

Landry was hurt by the sight ; his decency revolted against the unfairness. He caught hold of the boy, seized both bonnet and stick, gave him a good blow with the latter on his behind, and turned back to the rest of them. They fled, merely at sight of him, and taking poor Cricket by the hand, he restored her head-dress to her.

Landry's spirited conduct and the yokels' panic raised loud laughter amongst the by-standers. He was applauded ; but Madelon took sides against him, and there were some lads of his own age, and even older, who were apparently laughing at his expense.

Landry had lost his shyness. He felt himself brave and strong, and there was something manly in him that told him he was doing his duty in preventing the ill-treatment of any woman, plain or pretty, big or small, whom he

had chosen for his partner in the dance in the sight and hearing of all. He noticed how he was being eyed by the group round Madelon, and he went straight up to Aladenise and Alaphilippe and the rest of them, saying :

" Well, you lads ! What have you got to say, eh ? If I choose to pay attention to this girl here, what offence is that to you ? And if you're shocked, why do you turn away and whisper about it ? Am I not here in front of you ? Can't you see me ? You were saying over here that I was just a child. But there's not one man here, or even a lad, who's said it to my face ! I'm waiting to be spoken to, and we shall see whether the girl this *child* dances with can be molested."

Sylvinet had not left his brother. He did not approve of this quarrel being stirred up, but held himself ready to back up Landry. There were four or five stout young men there, a head or more taller than the twins, but when they saw the brothers so determined, and as, after all, fighting over such a trifle was something to be thought about, they did not breathe a word, and looked at each other as if asking which one intended to measure himself with Landry. None stepped forward, so Landry, who had not loosed Fadette's hand, said to her :

" Put on your bonnet quickly, Fanchon, and let's dance again, so that I can see if they'll come and take it away from you."

" No," said little Fadette, wiping her tears,

" I've danced enough for to-day. You're free of the rest."

" Not a bit, not a bit, you must dance again," said Landry, aflame with pride and courage. " It shall not be said that you can't dance with me without being insulted."

And he made her dance again, but nobody ventured on one hostile glance or word. Madelon and her swains had gone to dance elsewhere, and after this bourrée little Fadette said to Landry under her breath :

" That's enough for the present, Landry. I'm very pleased with you, and I give you back your pledge. I'm going home. Dance with anyone you choose to-night."

And she went off to find her little brother, who was fighting with some other children, and disappeared so quickly that Landry did not even see which way she had gone.

## XVII

LANDRY supped at home with his brother; and as Sylvinet was much concerned by all that had happened, he told him how he had had an adventure with the will-o'-the-wisp the evening before, and how little Fadette had saved him, whether by courage or by magic, and had demanded as reward that he should dance with her seven times at the fête of St. Andoche. He did not tell him the rest of the story, not wishing ever to let him know how afraid he had been of finding him drowned the previous year. And in that he was wise, for the evil thoughts that children sometimes take into their heads will often rise again if they are called to their minds or spoken about.

Sylvinet approved the way in which his brother had kept his word, and told him that the annoyance it had entailed only increased the credit that was due to him. But startled though he was at the danger Landry had run in the river, he failed in gratitude to little Fadette. He felt so coldly towards her that he refused to believe that she had been there just by chance, or that she had helped him out of kindness.

"It was she," he said, "who conjured up that will-o'-the-wisp to bewilder you and drown you.

But God did not allow it, because you were not, and never have been, in a state of mortal sin. And that evil Cricket abused your kindness and gratitude ; she extracted a promise which she knew was very annoying and harmful to you. She's a bad lot, that girl. All witches like the wrong ; there are no good ones. She knew quite well that she would make you quarrel with Madelon and all the decent people of your acquaintance. She also wanted you to fight. And if God hadn't protected you a second time against her, you might well have had an ugly quarrel and come to some harm."

Landry was always ready to look at things through his brother's eyes, and thought that he was perhaps right. He hardly defended Fadette against him. They talked together about the will-o'-the-wisp, which Sylvinet had never seen, and was very eager to talk about, though not to see. But they did not dare talk of it to their mother, because the very thought of the thing frightened her ; nor to their father, because he made light of it, and had been seeing it for twenty years without paying any heed.

There was to be dancing still until midnight. But Landry was sore at heart because of having quarrelled so finally with Madelon, and did not want to profit by the liberty Fadette had granted him. So he helped his brother to go and bring in the cattle from the pasture. And as that brought him half-way over to La Priche and he had a headache, he said good-bye to

Sylvinet at the end of the reed-beds. Sylvinet did not want him to go by the Roulettes ford, for fear of the will-o'-the-wisp, or the Cricket, again playing him some evil trick. He made him promise to take the longer road and go over the plank bridge at the big mill.

Landry obeyed his brother's wish, and instead of crossing through the rushes, went down the track that runs by the slope of the Chaumois. He had no qualms, because the noises of the fête were still in the air. For he could hear, though only faintly, the bagpipes and the shouts of the St. Andoche dancers, and he knew well that the spirits only do mischief when everybody in the countryside is fast asleep.

At the foot of the slope, close to the quarry, he heard a voice moaning and weeping. A curlew, he thought at first. But the nearer he came, the more it resembled a human moan ; and as his heart never failed him when he had to do with beings of his own kind, and especially when it was a question of coming to their aid, he boldly descended into the deepest part of the quarry.

But the person who was thus lamenting fell silent on hearing footsteps draw near.

"Who's that crying in there?" he asked in a confident tone.

Not a word in reply.

"Is anyone ill in there?" he asked again.

And as nothing was said he was minded to go away. But before doing so he thought he

would look through the rocks and thistles that cumbered the place, and very soon, in the light of the rising moon, he saw somebody lying full-length on the ground, face towards him. The figure was deadly still, either because it was hardly better than dead, or because it had flung itself there in some terrible affliction, and, to avoid being seen, was resolved not to stir.

Never as yet had Landry seen or touched a corpse. The idea that this might be one affected him deeply. But he overcame his feelings, thinking of his duty to help his neighbour, and went forward resolutely to try the hand of the outstretched figure : but, realising that concealment was useless, it half rose as he came up—and then Landry saw that it was little Fadette.

## XVIII

JUST at first Landry was annoyed at finding Fadette always inevitably crossing his path. But as she seemed to be in distress he took compassion on her. And these were the words that passed between them :

" Well, Cricket, so it's you who were crying like that ? Has someone been beating you or chasing you again, that you're lamenting and hiding like this ? "

" No, Landry, nobody has molested me since you defended me so bravely. What's more, I'm not afraid of anyone. I was hiding just to cry, and that's all ; for there's nothing so silly as letting other people see your sorrow."

" But why are you so sorely distressed ? Is it because of the cruel things they did to you to-day ? You were somewhat to blame yourself, but console yourself and don't expose yourself to such things again."

" And why do you say that it was partly my fault, Landry ? Was it such an outrage, my wanting to dance with you ? Am I the only girl who hasn't the right to amuse herself like the others ? "

" It's not that, Fadette. I don't reproach you for having wanted to dance with me. I

did your wish, and bore myself with you in the way I ought. Your wrong is older than what happened to-day, and if you have suffered, your grievance is not against me at all; it is against yourself, as you very well know."

"No, Landry, no. As truly as I love God, I admit no such wrong. I have never thought of myself, and if I have any reason to blame myself, it's for having unwillingly caused you distress."

"Don't talk about myself, Fadette, I have no complaint against you. Let's talk about you. And as you don't see any faults in yourself, will you let me tell you them, in perfect good faith and friendliness."

"Yes, Landry, I should like it. And I think that's the best punishment you could give me for any good or ill I may have done you."

"Well then, Fanchon Fadet, you are talking reasonably, and for the first time in your life I see you gentle and amenable. So I am going to tell you why you don't get the respect that a girl of sixteen ought to be able to insist on. The truth is that there is nothing of the girl in you, and everything of a boy, both in your mien and your manners. You don't take care of your person. Now, to begin with, you don't look clean, you take no care of yourself, and you make yourself look ugly by the way you dress and talk. You know quite well that the children call you by a name even more unpleasing than 'Cricket.' They

often call you 'the tom-boy.' Well, do you really think it's decent, at sixteen years old, not to look like a girl? You climb trees for all the world like a stable-door cat, and when you jump astride a mare, with neither bridle nor saddle, you make her gallop as if the devil himself were across her. It's all right to be strong and brisk, and to be afraid of nothing; it's a natural advantage for a man. But for a woman, enough is enough, and you always seem to be trying to show off. Then again, you are noticed, and teased, and they shout after you as after a wolf. You have wit, and you answer back with mischievous things that make those who aren't spoken to laugh. There again, it's good to have a quicker tongue than others; but by showing it, you make enemies. You're inquisitive too, and when you've learnt other people's secrets, you fling them in their faces the moment you have a grievance against them. That makes you feared, and those who are feared are always hated. They gain more harm than they give. And finally, whether you're a witch or not, I'm ready to believe that you have some acquaintance with that sort of thing; but I hope you have not given yourself over to evil spirits. You try to make it appear so in order to frighten your persecutors, and that only gives you rather a bad name. There, those are all your faults, Fanchon Fadet, and it's by reason of these wrongs that people feel bad towards you. Turn it all over in your mind,

and you'll see that if you were willing to be a little more like other folk, you would be better liked, just because you are in certain ways more clever than they are."

"Thank you, Landry, very much," said little Fadette, very gravely, after religiously listening to what the twin had said. "You have told me more or less what everyone reproaches me with, and told me with great honesty and care, which nobody else does. But would you like me now to answer you? And for that, will you sit down beside me for a moment or two?"

"It's not a very pleasant place," said Landry, who had no particular desire to linger with her, and kept thinking of the evil spells which she was accused of putting on those who did not keep her at arm's length."

"You don't think it a pleasant place," she went on, "because you rich folk are so difficult. You must have fine turf if you're to sit outside, and in your meadows and gardens you can choose the nicest places and the best shade. But those who have nothing don't ask so much of their God, and make do with the first stone they find whereon to lay their head. The thorns do not wound their feet and wherever they may be, they have eyes for all that is fair and lovely in heaven or earth. There is no ugly place, Landry, for those who know the virtue and goodness of all things God has made. I am not a witch, but I know the uses of the humblest herbs that you crush beneath your feet; and

when I know what they are good for, I look upon them, and scorn neither their smell nor their looks. I tell you this, Landry, to bring home to you now something that applies just as much to Christian souls as to flowers in the garden or briars in the quarry : and that is, that too often we despise what is outwardly neither good nor beautiful, and so deprive ourselves of what is helpful and salutary."

"I don't understand very clearly what you're driving at," said Landry, sitting down beside her.

And they stayed silent for a moment, for little Fadette's mind had flown off on ideas that Landry had no conception of. And for his part, although he felt perplexed in his mind, he could not help feeling delight in listening to the girl ; for never had he heard so sweet a voice, or words better spoken, than the words and voice of little Fadette at that moment.

"Listen, Landry," she said to him. "I am to be pitied more than blamed. There may be wrongs in me, but at least I've never done serious wrongs to others ; and if this were a just world, people would look more at my good heart than at my ugly face and sorry clothes. Just think, or, if you don't know, just let me tell you, of what my lot has been since the day I was born. I will say no ill of my grandmother to you; everyone blames her and insults her, even though she is not there to defend herself, and I can't do so myself, because I don't properly know

what wrong she has done, nor what pushed her to do it. Ah, well ! the world is so heartless, that when my mother had only just deserted me, and I was still weeping bitterly, bitterly, all the other children would fling my mother's fault in my face, and force me to blush for her—and that for the smallest grievance they might have against me, for some game, for some trifle they'd have overlooked amongst themselves. I dare say that, as you say, a sensible girl placed in my shoes would have humbled herself in silence, and prudently abandoned her mother's cause, and let her be insulted to avoid being treated so herself. But I'm not like that, you see, I couldn't do. It was something stronger than myself. My mother was always my mother, and whatever they may wish, whether I find her again or whether I never hear tell of her I shall always love her with all the strength that's in my heart. So when they call me the bad woman's child, or the camp-follower's child, it angers me. But not because of myself ; I know well enough that that can't hurt me, because I've done no wrong ; no, just because of that poor, dear woman whom it's my duty to defend. And as I don't know how to defend her, and couldn't even if I knew how, I avenge her by telling others the truths they deserve, and show-in them that they are worth no more than she at whom they cast their stone. And that's why they say I'm inquisitive and impudent, and that I dig out their secrets just to spread them abroad.

True enough, God made me inquisitive, if that means wanting to know things that are hidden. But if folk had been decently humane to me, I should never have dreamed of satisfying my curiosity at the neighbours' expense. I'd have confined my own amusement to the knowledge of the secrets my grandmother teaches me for the healing of the human body. Flowers, herbs, stones, flies, all the secrets of nature—there would be quite enough to occupy me and keep me amused, for I'm fond of wandering and rummaging about everywhere. I should always have been alone, and never wearied of that, for my chief delight is to go to places that nobody else goes to, and dream there about scores of things that I never hear spoken about by people who count themselves very wise and very learned. If I let myself be drawn into my neighbours' business, it was just from my desire to make myself useful with the scraps of knowledge that came my way, and from which my grandmother herself often draws profit for herself without saying anything. Well, instead of being honestly thanked by all the children of my own age whose wounds and ailments I used to cure, and to whom I would teach my remedies without asking any return, I found myself treated as a witch-girl ; and though people might come and ask me very nicely when they needed me, afterwards they'd be telling silly stories about me at the first chance they had.

"That made me bitter. And I could have

hurt them : for if I know things that do good, I also know things that do harm. But, nevertheless, I've never made use of them, I have no rancour in me, and if I avenge myself in words, it's because it relieves me to say at once whatever is on the tip of my tongue ; then I think no more about it, and forgive as God bids us forgive. As for being heedless of my person and manners, that ought to show that I'm not crazy enough to imagine myself a beauty, when I know that I'm too ugly for anyone to set eyes upon. I know that, because I've been told so often ; and when I saw how harsh and scornful people are towards those whom God has endowed poorly, I took pleasure in displeasing them, and consoled myself with the idea that my face had nothing repulsive in the sight of God and my guardian angel, who would no more blame me for it than I would blame myself. There again, I'm not one of those who say : 'There's a caterpillar, the horrid beast ! Oh, how ugly it is ! Kill it !' I don't kill God's poor creature, and if the caterpillar falls into the water, I hold out a leaf to let it save itself. Whereupon they declare that I love harmful animals, and that I'm a witch, just because I don't like hurting frogs, or tearing a wasp's legs off, or nailing a live bat against a tree-trunk. 'Poor beast,' I say to them, 'if everything ugly had to be killed, I shouldn't have any more right to be alive than you have.'"

## XIX

LANDRY, somehow or other, was moved by the way that Fadette spoke thus humbly and calmly of her plainness. And calling to mind her features, which he could hardly see in the darkness of the quarry, he said to her, with no thought of flattery :

" But, Fadette, you're not so plain as you think, or as you like to say. There is many a girl more ill-favoured than yourself who's never thought the worse of for that."

" A little more, a little less, I dare say, Landry : but you can't tell me that I'm a pretty girl. Come along, don't try to console me, for I'm not put out by the fact."

" Deuce take it ! " he exclaimed. " Who knows how you would look if you had dresses and bonnets like the rest of them ? One thing everyone says is this, that if you hadn't such a short nose, such a big mouth, and such a dark skin, you wouldn't be at all bad. For they also say that in all the country round there's no pair of eyes to touch yours, and if you had not such a bold, scoffing look, people would like to be looked on with favour by such eyes."

Landry spoke in this way without heeding his words. He found himself recalling the faults

and the qualities of little Fadette, and for the first time giving them an interest and attention that he would not have thought himself capable of a few minutes earlier. She noted that, but gave no sign, being too sensible to take the matter seriously.

" My eyes look with favour on what is good," she said, " and with pity on what is not. So I'm consoled for being displeasing to those who do not please myself. I cannot imagine how all these pretty girls I see being courted can be coquettes with everybody, as if everybody took their fancy. For my own part, if I were a beauty, I should want to appear so only to the man who suited me, and make myself lovable only in his eyes."

Landry's thoughts went back to Madelon. But little Fadette did not leave him on that subject. She continued to speak thus :

" So there, Landry, is all the wrong I've done to others : that is, in not seeking to gain their pity or indulgence for my ugliness, in showing myself before their eyes without any finery to disguise it. And that offends them, and makes them forget that I have often done them good, and never done them harm. Another thing is this : even if I should pay attention to my person, where could I find the wherewithal to rig myself out ? Have I ever begged—although I haven't one brass farthing of my own ? Does my grandmother give me the least thing, except a roof and my food ? And if I can't profit from the

few poor rags of things my mother left me, is that any fault of mine, seeing that no one has taught me how, and that from ten years old I've been deserted with neither thanks nor love from anyone? I know the reproaches that are thrown at me; you had the charity to spare me those: they say I'm sixteen now and could take work somewhere, and then I'd have wages and be quite able to keep myself, but that just love of idleness and vagabonding keeps me with my grandmother, although she has little liking for me, and could easily afford to keep a servant-woman."

"Well, Fadette, and isn't that the truth?" said Landry. "You're blamed for not liking work, and your grandmother says to anyone who'll listen that it would pay her to take a servant in your place?"

"Grandmother says that because she likes scolding and whining. And yet when I talk of leaving her, she holds me back, because she knows that I'm more useful to her than she likes to admit. She hasn't the eyes or legs she had at fifteen for finding the herbs that she uses for making her draughts and powders, and some of these have to be sought a long way off and in very difficult places. What's more, as I've told you, I find virtues in herbs myself which she does not know they have, and she is very astonished when I make drugs and she afterwards sees their good effects. As for our beasts, they're so fine that people are surprised to see a

flock like that belonging to somebody who has nothing but the common pasture for them. Well, grandmother knows whom she must thank for having ewes with such fine wool and goats that milk so well. No, no, she is not in the least desirous of my leaving her: I'm worth much more to her than I cost her. And I like my grandmother, for all that she scolds me and stints me. But I've another reason too for not leaving her, and if you like I'll tell it to you, Landry."

"Well, tell it then," said Landry, who was by no means tired of listening to Fadette.

"It's this," she went on, "that when I was only ten years old, my mother left on my hand a poor little child, very ugly, as ugly as myself, and still more disgraced, for he was a cripple from his birth, a mean, sickly, crooked little fellow, always sorry and vexatious because he's always suffering, poor boy! And everyone bothers him and repulses him and spurns him, my poor little Grasshopper! My grandmother has too rough a tongue for him, and would strike him too often if I didn't protect him against her by pretending to beat him myself. But I'm always mighty careful not to touch him in earnest, and he knows it, he does! So when he has done something wrong, he runs up and hides in my skirts, and says: 'Beat me before granny catches me!' And so I give him a make-believe thrashing, and the little rascal puts up a fine show of wailing. And I look after

him too. I can't always help his being in rags and tatters, poor little brat, but when I do have some bit of old stuff, I arrange it to clothe him; and I cure him when he's ill, whereas granny would be the death of him, for she never can look after children. In fact, I keep the poor sickly little thing alive. He'd be wretched without me, and very soon under the grass beside our poor father, whom I wasn't able to save from dying. I don't know whether I'm doing him a service in keeping him alive, twisted and horrid as he is. But it's something stronger than myself, Landry, and when I think of going into service to have some money of my own and escape from the poverty I now exist in, my heart melts with pity and reproaches me, as if I were poor Grasshopper's own mother and were seeing him die through my own fault. So there are all my wrongs and failings, Landry. Now, let God be my judge. For my own part, I forgive those who misunderstand me."

## XX

LANDRY had listened throughout to little Fadette with a great conflict of emotion, and without finding any retorts against her arguments. On the last counts, the manner in which she spoke of her little brother moved him in such a way that he seemed suddenly to feel a fondness for her, to feel as if he wanted to take her side against everybody.

"This time, Fadette," he said, "anyone who blamed you would himself be the first in the wrong. For everything you've just said is very well said, and nobody would doubt your good heart and sound reasoning. Why don't you let yourself be known for what you are? Nobody would speak ill of you, and some would even do you justice."

"I've told you, Landry," she answered. "I feel no need of pleasing anyone who is not pleasing to me."

"But if you tell me, then it means——"

And Landry stopped. He was astonished at what he had almost said. And he started again:

"So it means that you have more regard for me than for someone else? And yet I thought

you hated me because I had never been kind to you."

"Perhaps I do hate you a little," answered Fadette. "But if that has been so in the past, it is not so from to-day onwards; and I'll tell you why, Landry. I thought you were proud, and proud you are. But you can overcome your pride in order to do your duty, and your merit is all the higher for it. I thought you ungrateful by nature, and though you have been pushed to that by the pride they've instilled in you, still, you are so faithful to your word that no cost will stop you from keeping it. And I thought you a coward, and was led to despise you for that; but I can see that you are only superstitious, and that you're not lacking in courage when a definite danger must be faced. You've danced with me as your partner to-day, although it humiliated you. You even came to the church after Vespers to find me, at the moment I had forgiven you in my heart after saying my prayers, and when I had no further mind to torment you. You defended me against mischievous children, and you challenged those big lads who would have ill-treated me if it had not been for you. And to crown all, when you heard me crying this evening, you came to help me and comfort me. Don't think, Landry, that I shall ever forget these things. All your life you shall have proof that I keep the memory of them intact, and you can ask me favours in your turn, anything you like, at any time

whatever. Because, to begin with, I know that I caused you a great sorrow to-day. Yes, I know, Landry. I'm witch enough to have read you, although I had no idea of it this morning. Come, you may be sure I have more love of mischief than real malice, and that if I had known you were so fond of Madelon, I wouldn't have put trouble between you, as I did by forcing you to dance with me. It amused me, I'll agree, to see you turning your back on a handsome girl to dance with an ugly little scrap like me. But I thought it was only a pin-prick to your self-esteem. When I came to see that it was like a knife in your heart, and that in spite of yourself you kept looking in Madelon's direction, and that her vexation made you want to cry, I cried myself. Yes, I did! I cried when you wanted to fight her young men, and you thought I was weeping tears of repentance. That's why I was still crying so bitterly when you surprised me here, and why I shall go on crying, until I have undone the harm I have caused to the fine, brave lad that I now know you to be!"

"But, my poor Fanchon," said Landry, moved by the tears she was beginning to shed again, "even suppose you have caused bad feeling between me and a girl I was fond of, as you say, what could you do to bring us together again?"

"Trust me, Landry," said Fadette. "I'm not so foolish as not to explain myself properly.

Madelon will know that the wrong began with myself. I shall confess to her, and leave you white as snow. If she does not give you her favour again to-morrow, it will be because she has never really loved you, and——"

"And it will mean that I ought not to regret her, Fanchon. As she never has loved me, in point of fact, you would be wasting your trouble. Don't do it. Forget the trifling pain you've caused me. I've got over that already."

"These hurts do not heal so quickly," answered Fadette. And collecting herself, "from what they all say . . ." she added. "It's spite that makes you talk like that, Landry. Sleep over it; to-morrow will come, and you'll be very sad at heart until you make your peace with that fine girl."

"I dare say," said Landry. "But at the moment I give you my solemn word I know nothing about it and think no more of it. I imagine it is you who make me think that I feel very fond of her. For my own part, I feel that if I did, it was so little that it has almost passed out of memory."

"It's queer," said little Fadette, sighing. "Is that the way you love, you boys?"

"Pooh! You girls love no better, as you're so easily hurt, and console yourselves so quickly with the first-comer! But don't let us talk of things that perhaps we do not yet understand—you at least, little Fadette, who are always making game of lovers. I can well believe that

at this moment you are amusing yourself with me, wanting to straighten out my affairs with Madelon. Do no such thing, I tell you, for she might easily think that I had charged you to do it, and she would be wrong. And then it would perhaps vex her to think that I'm putting myself before her as her formal suitor. For the truth is that I have never yet said one fond phrase to her, and if I've enjoyed being with her and dancing with her as her partner, she has never emboldened me enough to tell her as much in words. So let the matter pass. She will get over it herself, if she chooses, and if she does not, I dare say I shall not die on that score."

"I know better than you do what you're thinking about this, Landry," said Fadette in answer. "I believe you when you tell me that you've never told Madelon your fondness in words. But she must be very simple not to have seen it in your eyes, and to-day especially. As I've been the cause of your vexation, I ought surely to be the cause of your satisfaction, and this is a good opportunity to show Madelon that you love her. It is for me to do, and I shall do it so nicely and so fittingly that she will never be able to accuse you of having pushed me on to doing it. Trust in little Fadette, Landry, trust the poor, plain Cricket! She isn't so ugly inside as out; and forgive her for having tormented you, because a great good will come of it for you. You shall learn that while it's

pleasant to have the love of a pretty lass, it's useful to have the friendship of a plain one. For plain girls are disinterested, and nothing can rouse spite or rancour in their hearts."

"You may be pretty or you may be plain, Fanchon," said Landry, taking her hand, "but I think I understand already that your friendship is something good, so good that maybe love is poor in comparison. You have great kindness; now I recognise that. For I treated you very badly, and you refused to heed it this day; and when you say that I behaved well with you, I think myself that I behaved disgracefully."

"How so, Landry? I don't know how——"

"The truth is, that I did not once kiss you at the dancing, Fanchon, and yet it was my duty and my right to do so, for it's the custom. I treated you as little girls of ten are treated: one doesn't condescend to kiss them, and yet you are almost my own age—there's not a year between us. So I insulted you there, and if you were not such a good soul, you'd have noticed it soon enough."

"I never thought of it," said little Fadette. (And she rose, for she felt she was lying, and did not want it to be apparent.) "But stop," she said, with forced gaiety, "listen to the crickets singing in the corn stubble! They're calling me by name, and the owl down there is calling out the time that the stars point to on the dial of the sky!"

"I hear it too. And I must get back to La Priche. But before I say good-bye, Fadette, tell me if you won't forgive me?"

"But I bear you no grudge, Landry. I've nothing to forgive."

"Yes, you have," said Landry. He was stirred by something indefinable since her words about love and friendship, spoken in that voice of hers so soft that the voices of the bullfinches, chirruping as they dozed in the bushes, seemed harsh in comparison. "Yes, you have. You owe me forgiveness: you must tell me I must kiss you here and now, to make up for having failed to do it during the day."

Little Fadette trembled slightly. But then, immediately recovering her good humour, she exclaimed:

"Landry! You want me to make amends for your wrong by a punishment! Well, I count it quits, my lad! It is quite enough to have danced with the ugly one, it would be too much of a good thing to want to kiss her!"

"Stop, don't say that!" exclaimed Landry, catching her hand and arm. "I can see no punishment in kissing you . . . unless the thing hurts you or disgusts you, coming from me . . ."

And as he said the words, his desire to kiss little Fadette was such that he trembled with fear lest she might not consent.

"Listen, Landry," she said to him in her

gentle, winning voice. "If I were a beauty, I'd tell you that this is not the hour or the place for kissing in secret. And if I were a coquette, I'd be thinking otherwise, and saying to myself that it is the hour and the place, because the darkness hides my plain looks and because there's no one here to make you feel ashamed of your whim. But I'm neither one nor the other, so what I say to you is this: Shake my hand in token of honest friendship, and I shall be content with having your friendship, for I've never had any other, and I'll never desire other friendship than that."

"Yes," said Landry, "I shake your hand with all my heart, do your hear, Fadette? But the most honest friendship—and that's what I feel for you—doesn't prevent a kiss. If you deny me that proof, I'll believe you still have something against me."

And he tried to kiss her unawares. But she struggled, and when he persisted, she began to cry.

"Leave me alone, Landry, you're hurting me."

Landry stopped in astonishment, so pained at seeing her in tears again that he felt almost resentful.

"I see well enough," he said, "that you aren't telling the truth when you say that mine is the only friendship you want. You have one stronger than that, which forbids you to give me a kiss."

"No, Landry," she answered, sobbing. "But I'm afraid that if you once kiss me in the dark without seeing me, you'll hate me when you see me in daylight again."

"And have I never seen you before?" he said impatiently. "Can't I see you at this moment? Look here, come out into the moonlight. I see you all right, and I don't know about your being plain, but I like your face because I like you—and that's all about it."

And he kissed her then, trembling just at first, and then kissed her again with such fire that she was startled, and pushed him away, saying:

"Enough, Landry! Stop! You must be kissing me in anger, or thinking of Madelon. Calm yourself. I'll talk to her to-morrow, and to-morrow you shall kiss her with more delight than ever I can give you."

And with that she ran quickly from the edge of the quarry, and sped lightly away.

Landry was all but crazy. His desire was to run after her, and three times he began to do so before deciding to go down by the bank of the river again. In the end, feeling that the devil was at his heels, he too began to run, and he did not stop until he reached La Priche.

When he went out at dawn next day to see his oxen, he thought inwardly, all the while he was grazing them and coaxing them, of that long hour's talk he had had in the Chaumois quarry with little Fadette. It had seemed to him only

a moment. His head was still heavy with sleep, and with the mental fatigue of a day so different from that which he ought by rights to have passed. He felt troubled, and almost frightened, by his feeling for this girl who was for ever coming before his eyes again, plain and ill-kempt as he had always known her. Sometimes he imagined that he had been dreaming those desires of his to embrace her, and the satisfaction he had felt in pressing her to his heart as if he had felt a great love for her, as if she had suddenly appeared more lovely and more desirable than any girl on earth.

"She must really be a spell-binder, as they say, for all she denies it," he reflected. "She certainly bewitched me last night. Never in all my life have I felt such a flame of fondness for father or mother, brother or sister, certainly not for pretty Madelon, and no, not even for my dear twin Sylvinet, as that little demon made me feel last night. If Sylvinet could have seen what was in my heart, he'd probably have been eaten up with jealousy. For my attachment for Madelon did my brother no harm, whereas if I had to remain even for the whole of one day, maddened and blazing as I was for a moment beside the Fadette girl, I'd go out of my mind and should not know anyone else in the world but her."

And Landry felt as if he were choked with shame, fatigue, and impatience. He sat down on his oxen's manger, terrified lest the spell-binder

had robbed him of courage, reason, and health.

But when the sun was higher in the sky and the farm-workers of La Priche had risen, they began to rally him on his dance with the plain little Cricket. And so ugly, so ill-mannered, so tatterdemalion, did they make her in their jesting, that he knew not where to hide his face, so ashamed did he feel, not only for what had been visible, but for all that he took care that nobody should know about.

However, he showed no anger, for the folk at La Priche were all friends of his and had no bad intent in their teasing. He even plucked up courage to tell that little Fadette was not what they believed her to be, that she was as good as lots of others, and was capable of doing great services. Whereat they rallied him all the more.

"Her mother might, I dare say," they said. "But as for her, she's an ignorant child, and if you have a beast sick, I don't advise you to follow her remedies, for she's a little chatterbox who doesn't know one single secret for cures. But she has the secret of putting lads to sleep, it appears, for you hardly left her side for a moment at St. Andoche. And you'd better pay heed to that, Landry my lad, or you'll soon be known as the boy cricket, or Fadette's flame. The devil will be after you. Old Nick will be coming to pull the sheets off our beds and knotting our horses' manes. We shall have to have you exorcised."

"I dare say he put on one of his stockings outside in yesterday morning," said little Solange. "That attracts the witches, and little Fadette noticed it all right!"

## XXI

LATER on, when Landry was busy with thatching, he saw little Fadette go by. She was walking fast, in the direction of a clearing where Madelon was gathering fodder for her sheep. It was the hour for unyoking the oxen, as they had finished their half-day, and while Landry drove them back to the pasture, he kept watching Fadette running, with steps so light that she hardly seemed to bruise the blades of grass beneath them. He was curious to know what she would say to Madelon, and instead of hurrying to go and have his soup, which was waiting for him in the furrow still fresh from the iron of the plough, he went off quietly along the side of the clearing to listen to what these two girls might be plotting. He could not see them, and as Madelon murmured her answers in a very low voice, he did not gather at all what she was saying. But Fadette's voice, though gentle, was none the less clear, and he did not lose one word of hers, although she did not raise her voice at all. She was talking to Madelon about him, telling her, as she had promised Landry, about the pledge he had given her ten months before, to be at her command for something that she would demand

at her own pleasure. She explained all this so humbly and so nicely that it was a pleasure to hear. And then, without one word of the will-o'-the-wisp, or of Landry's panic, she told how he had almost been drowned by losing the track at the Roulettes ford on the eve of the fête. In a word, she set it all forth in the best light, and made it clear that the whole trouble sprang from her own vanity and her own whim to dance with a grown lad, she who had never danced with any but boys.

Whereat Madelon, in a pet, raised her voice, and said :

" What does all this matter to me ? You can dance all your life with the twins from the Bessonière. You needn't think, Cricket, that you're doing me the slightest wrong or causing me the slightest envy."

" Don't be so harsh on Landry, Madelon," replied Fadette. " For Landry has lost his heart to you, and if you don't want it, he'll be more grieved than I could possibly tell you."

And she said it with such pretty words, in such a caressing tone, and praising Landry so highly that he would have liked to preserve all her ways of speech to use them when he might need them, and was left blushing with delight at hearing himself approved in this way.

Madelon also was astonished, for her own part, at little Fadette's pretty speech. But she scorned to show it.

" You jabber prettily and you're as bold as

brass," she said to Fadette. "Anyone would think your grandmother had been giving you a lesson in trying to wheedle people. But I don't like talking with witches; it's unlucky; so leave me alone, you ridiculous Cricket. If you've found a lad, keep him, my pretty lass: for he's the first that ever had a fancy for your ugly mug, and he'll be the last. As for me, I don't want your leavings, even if he's a king's son. Your Landry's just a fool, and he can't be worth much if, now that you think you've taken him from me, you come so promptly to ask me to take him back again. A fine lad for me, if Fadette herself doesn't fancy him!"

"If that's what's hurting you," answered Fadette in a tone that went straight to Landry's heart, "and if you're so proud that you will only be just to me after you have humiliated me, be content with that. Trample on poor Cricket's pride and courage, my fine Madelon. You think I despise Landry, and that otherwise I shouldn't ask you to pardon him. Well, listen to this, if you please: I have loved him myself for a long while back, and he's the only lad I have ever thought about, or perhaps ever will, all my life long. But I'm too sensible, and also too proud, ever to think of winning his love. I know what he is, and I know what I am. He is handsome and rich and well thought of. I am ugly, poor, despised. So I know very well that he will not be mine, and you must have seen for yourself at the fête how he despised me.

So rest content, for the lad whom Fadette only dares to look at, gazes on you with eyes brimming with love. Punish Fadette by mocking her and taking back from her the lad she would not dare to dispute with you. If you don't do it from friendship for him, do it at least to punish my insolence. And promise me, when he comes back to ask your pardon, that you'll be kind to him and console him a little."

But instead of her heart being melted by such submission and devotion, Madelon showed herself very harsh. She sent Fadette away, still telling her that Landry was what she needed, and that for her own part she found him too childish and too silly. But Fadette's great self-sacrifice bore fruit, in spite of Madelon's rebuffs. Women's hearts are so made that a young lad will begin to seem a man in their eyes as soon as they see him esteemed and favoured by other women. Madelon had never thought very seriously of Landry, but now, as soon as she had dismissed little Fadette, she began to think of him often. She went over in her mind all that this fine talker had said of Landry's love, and reflecting that Fadette was so far gone in love for him that she dared to admit it, she gloried in her power of vengeance on the poor girl.

That evening she went to La Priche, from which her own home was distant not more than two or three gunshots, and on the pretence of seeking one of her sheep that had been mixed up with her uncle's flock in the fields, she showed

herself to Landry, and gave him an encouraging look to make him come and talk to her.

Landry saw it well enough. For since his dealings with little Fadette his wits were very sharp. "Fadette is a witch," he reflected. "She has given me back Madelon's good graces, and she's done more for me in a quarter of an hour's chat than I could ever do in a year. She has wonderful wits, and a heart such as God does not often make."

And with these thoughts he looked at Madelon; but so calmly that she withdrew before he had made up his mind to talk to her. Not that he felt ashamed before her: his shame had fled he knew not how. But with shame there had also fled the pleasure he had known in seeing her, and his old desire to win her love.

As soon as he had supped, he pretended to be going off to bed. But he slipped out of his bed, hurried along the walls, and made straight for the Roulettes ford. That night the will-o'-the-wisp was dancing there again. When he saw it whirling in the distance, Landry thought to himself: "All the better: if the sprite's there, Fadette won't be far off." And fearlessly he crossed the ford, without any mistake, and went right up to Mother Fadet's house, peering and gazing in every direction. But he stayed there for a good long time without seeing any light or hearing any sound. Everyone was in bed. He hoped that the Cricket might be roving somewhere near, for she used often to come out at night

after her grandmother and her Grasshopper were asleep. He began to wander about himself. He crossed the reeds, and went up to the Chaumois quarry, whistling and singing to attract attention to himself. But he met none but the badger scuttling into the undergrowth, and the owl hoo-hooing on his tree, and had to go home without being able to thank the good friend who had served him so well.

## XXII

THE whole week passed without Landry being able to come across Fadette. This astonished him, and worried him too. "She will think I am ungrateful again," he thought. "And yet if I do see no sign of her, it's not for want of waiting and looking for her. I must have really hurt her when I kissed her half against her will in the quarry; but I meant no harm, and did not mean to offend her."

And during the whole of that week he pondered, more than he had pondered in all his life. He could not see clearly into his own brain, but he was pensive and excited, and was obliged to force himself to work; for neither the big oxen, the shining plough, nor the splendid red earth, damp with the fine autumn rain, could take up all his brooding thoughts or fill all his dreams.

On the Thursday evening he went to see his twin, and found him care-laden like himself. Sylvinet's character was different from his own, but their very differences sometimes made them alike. You might have thought that he divined something troubling his brother's peace of mind, yet he was far from suspecting what it could be. He asked Landry whether he had made it up

with Madelon, and in telling him yes, Landry told him an intentional lie for the first time. For Landry had not really spoken one word to Madelon, and thought he would have time enough yet to tell him ; there was no hurry.

At last Sunday came, and Landry was one of the earliest to arrive for Mass. He went into church before the bell rang, knowing that little Fadette usually came in then, because, to everyone's amusement, she always said very long prayers. He saw a little girl kneeling in the Lady Chapel, her back turned, her face hidden in her hands in order to pray undistracted. Certainly it was little Fadette's posture, but it was neither her head-dress nor her rig-out, and Landry came out again to see if he could not find her in the porch—or the rag-box, as they call it hereabouts, because of the ragamuffin beggars who stand there during the office.

Fadette's tatters were the only ones he did not see. He heard Mass unheeding, and it was only at the Preface that this girl praying so devoutly in the Chapel caught his eye again. She raised her head, and he recognised his Cricket in a dress and demeanour that were both quite new to him. It was still her poor turn-out, her coarse woollen petticoat, red apron and untrimmed linen bonnet. But everything had been bleached, and cut and stitched anew since last week. Her skirt was longer and fell more becomingly over her stockings, which were quite white ; and her hat, likewise white,

had assumed a new shape, and lay nicely on her glossy black hair. Her scarf was new, a pleasant yellow colour that showed off her brown skin. And she had lengthened her corsage too, so that instead of looking like a plank with clothes on it, she had a slender and lissom figure, like the body of a fine honey-bee. Moreover, she must have washed her face and her hands for a week on end with some compound of flowers or herbs, for her pale face and pretty hands had all the clear soft look of the springtime hawthorn.

Landry dropped his prayer-book at the sight of this change in her, and the noise of its fall made little Fadette turn right round. She looked at him at the very instant that he looked at her. And she blushed a little, hardly more than a little wild rose, but enough to make her look very nearly pretty: the more so because her black eyes, which nobody had ever been able to find fault with, darted fire so clear that it seemed to transfigure her. And again Landry thought: "She is a witch girl. She has wanted to become beautiful instead of plain as she used to be—and here she is, beautiful by a miracle." He was powerless with fear, yet his fear did not stifle a desire to go up to her and speak with her, a desire so strong that right to the end of Mass his heart was leaping with impatience.

But she paid him no further heed, and instead of starting to run and romp with the children after her prayer was said, she took her departure

so discreetly that people had hardly time to see the change and improvement in her. Landry dared not follow her, especially as Sylvinet did not take his eyes off him ; but after an hour or so, he succeeded in slipping away, and this time, guided by his throbbing heart, he found little Fadette quietly tending her flock in the little sunken road that they call the Traîne au Gendarme, because one of the king's gendarmerie was killed there by the folk of La Cosse in the old days, when they were trying to force the poor to pay the *taille* tax and to do their spell of forced labour, contrary to the terms of the law, which as it stood was quite harsh enough already.

## XXIII

AS it was Sunday, little Fadette was neither sewing nor spinning while she herded her geese. She was passing her time in a quiet amusement which the children hereabouts sometimes take very seriously. She was looking for a four-leafed clover, which is rare to find and brings good luck to anyone who can lay a hand on it.

"Have you found it, Fanchon?" said Landry as he came up beside her.

"I've often found it," she answered. "But it doesn't bring luck as they say it will. I have three stalks of it in my book, but that has never been of any help to me."

Landry sat down beside her, as if settling down to chat. But suddenly he felt even more shy than he had ever been with Madelon, and, although he had meant to say lots of things, he found himself unable to speak one word.

Little Fadette too was seized with shyness, for although the twin said nothing, still, he looked at her with very strange eyes. At last she asked him why he seemed so astonished at sight of her.

"Unless it's because of the way I've done my head-dress," she said. "I followed your advice

in that, and I thought that if I wanted to look sensible, I'd best begin by dressing sensibly. Also I don't dare show myself, for I'm afraid of still being blamed, if they say that I have been trying to make myself less ugly and not succeeded."

"They can say what they like," said Landry. "I don't know what you've done to become pretty, but the fact remains that you are to-day; and nobody with eyes in his head could help seeing it."

"No joking, Landry!" answered little Fadette. "They say that beauty turns pretty girls' heads, and plain looks are the undoing of the plain ones. I had grown used to causing alarm, and I shouldn't like to become foolish by imagining I caused pleasure. But that wasn't what you came to talk about. I'm waiting to hear whether Madelon has forgiven you."

"I didn't come to talk about Madelon. She may have forgiven me, but I know nothing about it, and don't want to. Only, I do know that you spoke to her, and so well that I owe you endless thanks for it."

"How do you know I spoke to her? Did she tell you? In that case, did you make it up?"

"We have not made it up. We don't love each other enough, she and I, to have quarrels. I know that you spoke to her, because she told someone who brought word to me."

Little Fadette blushed deeply. It made her seem still more beautiful, for never until that

day had she had on her cheeks that honest colour of dread and pleasure which beautifies even the plainest. But she was concerned, at the same time, at the thought that Madelon must have repeated her words, and made her a laughing-stock on account of that love for Landry which she had confessed to.

"What did Madelon say about me?" she asked.

"She said I was a foolish donkey, and that all the girls disliked me, even little Fadette. She said that Fadette scorned me, and shunned me, and had been hiding all the week to avoid seeing me, although I had been running everywhere to find little Fadette. So it's I who am everybody's laughing-stock, Fanchon, because it's known that I love you and that you don't love me."

"That's no way to talk," answered Fadette in astonishment, for she was not witch enough to guess that at that moment Landry was being subtler than herself. "I did not think Madelon was so lying and had deceit in her. But you must forgive her that, Landry, for it is spite that makes her talk like that, and spite means love."

"Perhaps," said Landry, "that is why you feel no resentment against me, Fanchon. You pardon everything I do, because you despise everything I do."

"I haven't deserved those words from you, Landry. No, really I haven't. I was never

so mad as to tell all the lies they put into my mouth. I spoke quite differently to Madelon. What I told her was meant for her only, but it could do you no harm; indeed, it ought to have proved the esteem I held you in."

"Listen, Fanchon," said Landry. "Don't let us argue over what you said or didn't say. I want to consult you, and you're a wise woman, you are. Last Sunday, in the quarry there, I felt such a fondness come over me for you, how I don't know, that all the week I have not eaten or slept my fill. I want to hide nothing from you, because with a girl as clever as you are, it would be a waste of time. Well, then, I admit that I felt ashamed of my fondness on the Monday morning, and would have been glad enough to go far away not to fall into such folly again. But on Monday night I had already fallen so far that I crossed the ford at night without any heed for the will-o'-the-wisp, although it was trying to keep me from looking for you; for it was still there, and when he laughed his evil laugh at me, I returned it to him. Since Monday I have been crazy, because they make a fool of me over my feeling for you, and every evening I am like a madman because my feeling is stronger than any false shame. And now I see you to-day, so pleasing and so well-behaved, that everybody will be astonished likewise; and in a fortnight, if you go on like this, not only shall I be pardoned for being fond of you, but there will be others in love with you nearly as

much. And then I shall have no particular merit in loving you: you will owe me hardly any preference. And yet if you remember last Sunday, St. Andoche's Day, you'll also remember that over in the quarry I asked leave to kiss you, and that I did it with as good a will as if you had not the name of being ugly and hateful. There's my case, Fadette. Tell me if it means anything, and if you are vexed instead of persuaded."

Little Fadette had buried her face in her hands. She made no reply. From what he had heard of her talk with Madelon, Landry believed that she loved him, and admittedly that love had affected him so much that it had instantly brought his to the surface. But seeing the child's shy and sorry air, he began to be afraid that she had only been telling a tale to Madelon, with the kindly intention of achieving the reconciliation she strove for. That only heightened his love the more, and the thought vexed him. He lifted her hands from before her face, and saw that she was deathly pale. And as he reproached her keenly for not responding to the wild passion he felt for her, she dropped to the ground, joining her hands and sighing, for she was choking and falling from sheer weakness.

## XXIV

LANDRY was terrified. He slapped her hands to bring her round. They were cold as ice, and stiff as sticks. He warmed them and rubbed them in his own for a long time, and when at last she could speak, she said to him :

" I believe you're only playing with me, Landry. But there are some things that you must not joke about. So please leave me in peace, and never speak to me again, unless you have something to ask of me : in that case I'll always be ready to help you."

" Fadette, Fadette," said Landry, " you are saying a very wrong thing. It is you who trifled with me. You hate me, yet you made me think otherwise."

" I ? I ? " she said, in great distress. " What have I done to make you think that ? I've offered you true friendship, like that of your twin : and better perhaps, for I had no jealousy in me : instead of crossing you in your loves, I have helped you in them."

" That is true," said Landry. " You have been as good as good can be, and it is myself who am wrong for blaming you. Forgive me, Fanchon, and let me love you as I can. Perhaps it won't be so calmly as I love my twin or my

sister Nanette, but I'll promise not to try to kiss you any more if that is distasteful to you."

And turning on his own tracks, Landry imagined that little Fadette really had only a quiet friendliness for him. And being neither vain nor boastful, he felt as timid and backward in his suit with her as if he had never heard with his own two ears all that she had said about him to the fair Madelon.

As for little Fadette, she was clever enough to recognise at last that Landry was head over heels in love, and it was the extremity of her joy at this which left her for a moment swooning. But she was afraid of losing too quickly a happiness so quickly won. And that fear made her want to give Landry time to desire her love ardently.

He stayed with her until nightfall, for although he no longer dared to say tender words to her, he was so completely in love, and took such delight in seeing her and hearing her talk that he could not bring himself to leave her for one moment. He played with the Grasshopper, who was never far from his sister and soon came to join them. Landry was kind to him, and soon perceived that the poor little fellow, so ill-treated by everyone, was neither foolish nor vicious with anyone who treated him properly. In an hour or so indeed Jeanet was so far pacified, tame and grateful, that he was kissing the lad's hand and calling him "my Landry," just as he called his sister "my Fanchon." And Landry's compassionate

heart was softened towards him; he felt that everybody, himself included, had behaved very badly in the past towards old Mother Fadet's unhappy grandchildren, who only needed a little of the affection that others received to be the best of them all.

Next day, and on the following days, Landry succeeded in seeing Fadette. Sometimes it was in the evening, when he could talk a while with her; sometimes in the daytime, meeting her out amongst the fields. She could not stay long then, but he was satisfied with having said four or five heartfelt words and devouring her with his eyes, for he was not the lad to neglect his duty. Fadette continued to be pleasant in her speech and dress, and in her bearing towards people. And soon they noticed it, and changed their own tone and bearing towards her. She no longer behaved badly, so she was no longer insulted; and hearing no more insults, she was no longer tempted to vex and attack people with her tongue.

But opinion does not alter so readily as our resolutions, and some time had still to pass before she could gain people's esteem in place of their scorn, their good-will instead of their dislike. Later we shall see how this change came about, but for the present you can imagine for yourselves that no great share of the world's attention was given to little Fadette's reformation. There were four or five old worthies at La Cosse, the kind of old men and women who observe

indulgently how the young people are growing up, and become as it were the fathers and mothers of everybody in the place, and used sometimes to exchange views under the village nut-trees. Watching all the children or stripplings swarming around, some playing at ninepins, some dancing, the old folk would say :

" So-and-so will be a fine soldier if he goes on : he is too well-built to manage to be passed over. So-and-so will be clever and respected like his father. That lad will be good and steady, just like his mother. Young Lucette looks like being a good farm-girl. Fat Louise there will break more hearts than one. And just let little Marion grow—she'll be as sensible as any of the rest of 'em."

And when little Fadette's turn came for scrutiny and judgment :

" There she is, going off very fast, and not wanting to dance or sing. No one ever sees her now, not since St. Andoche. She must have been sore at having her hat torn off at the dancing by the lads from here. She's changed her big bonnet, too, and just now you'd say she was no plainer than anyone else."

" Have you noticed how white her skin has been getting for a while back ? " said Mother Couturier once. " She used to have a face like a quail's egg, all covered with freckles. But last time I saw her close, I was amazed to see her so white, so pale even that I asked her if

she had had the fever. To see her now you would say she could reform. Who knows? There are often plain lasses who turn pretty when they touch seventeen or eighteen."

"And good sense comes too," said old Naubin. "And a girl who has her wits about her learns to make herself smart and agreeable. It's high time the Cricket realised she isn't a boy. My word, we used to think that she'd turn out so badly that she'd be a disgrace to the village. But she'll steady up and get straight like the rest of them. She will feel that she has made amends for having had such a bad lot of a mother, and you'll see that she won't cause any talk about that."

"Amen to that," said Mother Couturier, "for it's not pretty for a girl to look like a horse gone wild. But I too have hopes of Fadette, for I met her the day before yesterday, and instead of coming up behind me and imitating my limp, as she used to do, she bade me good-day and asked after my health, as if she meant it too."

"That girl is more wild than wicked," said old Henri. "She's good at heart, mark my words. I know, because she has often kept my grandchildren in the fields with her, from pure kindness, when my daughter was ill; and looked after them very well too: they didn't want to leave her."

"Is it true what they tell me," continued Mother Couturier, "that one of Barbeau's twins

lost his head over her at the last St. Andoche fête?"

"Come, come!" said old Naubin. "You mustn't take that seriously. It was a children's game, and the Barbeaus are not fools, the children no more than the father or mother, now are they?"

So the talk went on about little Fadette. But as often as not she was never thought of at all, because nowadays she was hardly ever seen at all.

## XXV

BUT one person saw her often, and paid her much attention : and that was Landry Barbeau.

He was inwardly like a madman when he could not talk with her at his ease. But once he could get a moment with her, he was appeased and content, because she taught him good sense and consoled him in all his ideas. She used to play a little game with him. It had a touch, perhaps a trace of coquetry ; or, at least, he would sometimes think so, but as its motive was honourable, and she wanted none of his love, until he had turned the matter over and over again in his mind, he had no reason to take offence. She could not suspect him of wanting to deceive her in regard to the depth of his love, for it was a kind of love not often to be seen amongst country people, who love more patiently than townsfolk. And indeed Landry's character was more patient than most ; no one could ever have foretold that his flame would burn so fiercely, and anyone who could have known it (for he concealed it very well) would have been greatly astonished. But little Fadette, seeing his surrender to herself so complete and sudden, was afraid that it might be a flash in the pan ; or that, if she herself were

dangerously inflamed, things would advance no further between them than honesty permits between two children not yet old enough for marriage, in the view at least of parents and prudence. For love does not linger long, and when once it has passed into the blood of two young people, it is a miracle if it awaits the approval of someone else.

But little Fadette, who outwardly had been a child longer than others, inwardly possessed powers of reason and will far beyond her age. For that to be so, she had to have a spirit of proud strength, for her heart was no whit less ardent than the heart and blood of Landry, perhaps more so. She loved him to distraction, yet she bore herself with great seemliness ; for although he haunted her thoughts by day and by night and every hour of her time, and although she pined with impatience to see him and the desire to fondle him, yet as soon as she saw him she assumed an air of perfect calm, talked sensibly to him, even feigned ignorance still of the fires of love, and did not allow him to toy with her hand higher than the wrist.

Landry, in his bewitchment, might have forgotten himself and refused to submit to her any more in those retired places where they often sat together, and especially when the night was very dark ; but he was so much afraid of displeasing her and was so uncertain of his love being requited with love, that he lived with her as innocently as if she had been his

sister, and he himself Jeanet, the little Grasshopper.

To distract him from ideas which she did not want to encourage, she instructed him in the things that she knew, in which her wits and natural talent had outstripped her grandmother. She wanted there to be no mysteries for Landry, and, being always a little afraid of sorcery, she took every care to make him understand that the Devil had no part in the secrets of her knowledge.

"Come, Landry," she said to him one day, "you have only to think about the spirit of evil. There is only one spirit, and that is good, because it is the spirit of God. Lucifer is the invention of the Curé, and Old Nick is just an old wives' tale. When I was little I used to believe in him, and I was afraid of my grandmother's spells. But she laughed at me, for it is true that when someone is doubtful of everything, he makes others believe everything: no one believes in Satan less than the witches who pretend to summon him on every occasion. They know quite well they've never seen him and never received any help from him. Those who are simple enough to believe in him and call on him have never been able to make him appear. Look at the miller at Passe-aux-Chiens, for instance. My granny has told me how he went to the cross-roads with a big bludgeon in his hand to summon the Devil, he said, and give him a good thwacking. And they heard him shouting in the dark, 'Are you there, wolf-face?

Are you there, mad dog? Are you there, Old Nick?' And Old Nick never came. And the result was that the miller was nearly crazed with vanity, for he declared that the Devil was *afraid* of him!"

"But if you believe that the Devil doesn't exist," said Landry, "that is not exactly Christian, Fanchon mine."

"I can't argue about that," she answered, "but if he does exist, I am quite sure that he has no power to come on earth and ill-use us and demand our souls to get them out of the hands of our God. He would not have the impudence. And as the world is God's, it is only God who can govern the men and things that are in it."

And Landry, recovered from his foolish dread, could not help admiring how truly Christian little Fadette was in all her ideas and all her prayers. Her devoutness, indeed, was more lovely than that of other folk. She loved God with all the ardour of her heart, for in all things she had a lively head and a tender heart, and when she spoke of that love to Landry, he felt astonished at having learned to say prayers and follow practices which he had never tried to understand, and wherein he assumed an attitude of respect simply out of a sense of duty, without his heart having even been warmed, as little Fadette's was, by love for his Creator.

## XXVI

CHATTING and strolling with her, he learned the virtues of herbs and all the receipts for healing of man or beast. Before very long he tried one such on a cow of old Caillaud's which had a distended stomach from eating too much greenstuff. As the horse-leech had given her up, Landry gave her a potion that little Fadette had taught him how to make. He concocted secretly, and when the farm-hands, vexed at the loss of such a fine cow, came in the morning to throw her into a hole, they found the beast standing up and already beginning to nose about for food, her eye healthy and the distention nearly all gone. Another time a foal was bitten by a viper, and Landry, again follow-Fadette's instructions, saved it very promptly. Finally he was also able to try the remedy against the madness on a dog at La Priche. It was cured, and bit nobody. Landry hid his intimacy with little Fadette as much as possible, and did not boast of his knowledge, so the curing of his beasts was simply put down to the care with which he tended them. But Caillaud,

who had some understanding in the matter, as every good farmer ought, was inwardly much astonished, and said :

" Old Barbeau has no gift for cattle, and no luck with them either. He lost a good many last year, and not for the first time. But Landry has a lucky hand with them, and that's something that is born in you. You have it, or you haven't. And even if you go and study in the schools like *artists*, it's no use unless you have the knack by nature. Well, Landry has the knack, I tell you, and his idea makes him find what's wanted. It's a great natural gift he's received, and it will be worth more than capital in the good management of a farm."

Old Caillaud did not say this from credulity or lack of reason. But he was wrong in attributing a natural gift to Landry. Landry had none beyond that of being careful and understanding in his use of the receipts that he had been taught. But the natural gift is no fable. Fadette had it, and with the few trifling lessons her grandmother had given her, she discovered and divined, almost as if she invented, the virtues which God has placed in certain herbs and in certain modes of using them. She did not need any witchcraft for that, and was right in denying the charge. But she had an observant faculty, one that made comparisons, notes, trials, and that is undeniably a gift of nature. Caillaud pushed the matter a little further. He thought that such-and-such a herdsman or farm-hand

had a lucky or an unlucky hand with the cattle, and that the mere virtue of his presence in the cowshed did the animals good or did them harm. And yet, as there is always a grain of truth in the most fallacious of beliefs, it must be granted that good care, cleanliness, and conscientious work have a virtue for setting right what negligence or stupidity may have damaged.

Landry's tastes and interests had always been in that direction, and so his fondness for Fadette was increased by gratitude for his instruction, and by the high esteem in which he held the girl's talent. He then felt grateful to her for having forced him to put love on one side during their walks and talks, and he recognised too that she had more concern for the interest and usefulness of her swain than for the pleasure of letting herself be ceaselessly courted and flattered as he would at first have liked.

Soon Landry was so completely spellbound that he had abandoned all sense of shame at showing his love for this girl reputed to be plain, troublesome, and ill-bred. If he took any precaution, it was for his brother's sake ; for he knew Sylvinet's jealousy, and knew that he had already made great efforts to stifle his resentment at Landry's flirtation with Madelon, a very trifling affair, and a very tranquil one, in comparison with what he now felt for Fanchon Fadet.

But if Landry was too zealous in his love to

temper it with prudence, little Fadette made up for that in another way. She had a taste for mystery, and did not want Landry to be tried too sorely by the jokes of other people : further, she was much too fond of him to be willing to cause trouble within his family. So she insisted on a secret promise that about a year should go by before the thing was disclosed. Landry had made Sylvinet used to dropping his surveillance of all his acts and movements, and this country-side, sparsely peopled, scarred with ravines and covered with trees, is highly propitious to secret loves.

Sylvinet saw that Landry was no longer interested in Madelon ; and although he had at first accepted this sharing of his friendship as a necessary evil, made more agreeable by Landry's shyness and the girl's prudence, he was delighted in his heart that Landry was in no hurry to withdraw his affection and give it to a woman. Once freed from jealousy, he left his brother more free in his comings and goings on days of rest or days of festivity. Landry did not lack pretexts for coming or going, and especially on Sunday evenings he would leave the Bessonière at an early hour, and only return to La Priche on the stroke of midnight. This was easy for him, as he had had himself given a little bed in the *carphanion.* (You will pull me up, perhaps, over that word, because the schoolmaster is annoyed and insists on our saying *carphanaüm.* He may know the word, but he doesn't

know the thing: for I have been obliged to tell him that it is the place in the barn next to the stable, where they keep the yokes, chains, horse-shoes, and trinkets of all kinds, used for the beasts and implements of tillage.)

In this way Landry was able to come home at any hour he liked without waking anyone, and he always had Sunday to himself until the Monday morning. For Caillaud and his eldest son, sober men both, who never frequented inns or made merry on any holidays, were accustomed to take the whole care of the farm upon themselves on that day—in order, they said, that all the young people of the house, who worked more than they did during the week, could make merry and amuse themselves freely, according to God's command.

And during the winter, when nights were too cold for love-making to be easy in the open fields, Landry and little Fadette had a good refuge in Jacot's tower, an old dovecote on the farm, abandoned by the pigeons for long years past, but well roofed and well shut in. Indeed, he used it for stowing away his surplus provisions, and as Landry had the key, and as it was situated on the edge of the La Priche lands, not far from the Roulettes ford and in the middle of an enclosed field of lucerne, the Devil himself would have been hard put to it to break in upon the converse of our two lovers there. In fair weather they wandered in the young plantations which are scattered over the countryside. These

are good retreats for thieves and lovers. And as there are no thieves hereabouts, the lovers profit by the fact, and suffer there neither fears nor weariness.

## XXVII

BUT there's no secret that has no ending, and one fine Sunday, as Sylvinet was passing along by the wall of the graveyard, he heard the sound of his brother's voice a few feet away, behind the bend in the wall. Landry was talking very softly, but Sylvinet knew his voice so well that even if he had not heard it, he could have divined it.

"Why don't you want to come and dance?" he was saying to someone invisible to Sylvinet. "It's so long since you stopped after Mass that nobody would find fault with my taking you to dance, especially as I'm now blamed because I hardly seem to know you these days. They wouldn't say it was a matter of love, but just out of decency and because I'm curious to know whether you're still such a fine dancer after all this time."

"No, Landry, no," said an answering voice, which Sylvinet could not recognise, for it was long since he had heard it, as little Fadette had kept away from everybody, and from him in particular. "No, I must not attract attention. It is best so. And if you make me dance once, you'll be wanting to start again every Sunday.

Just believe what I've always said, Landry, that the day when your love for me is known will be the beginning of our woes. Let me go now, and when you've spent part of the day with your family and your twin, you can come and join me where we agreed."

"But it's a pity never to have a dance!" said Landry. "You used to be so fond of it, pretty one, and danced so well! What joy it would be to hold your hand and whirl you in my arms, and to see you dancing with nobody but me, so light and so pretty you are!"

"And that's just what must not happen," she went on. "But I see you miss your dancing, Landry dear, and I don't see why you have given it up. Go on, dance for a while. It will give me pleasure to think of you amusing yourself, and I'll wait for you more patiently."

"Oh, you're too patient, you are!" said Landry, in a voice that showed small trace of that virtue. "Me! I'd rather have both legs chopped off than go dancing with girls I don't care for, and whom I wouldn't kiss for a hundred francs."

"Oh, well," answered Fadette, "if I danced, I'd have to dance with others than you, and let myself be kissed too."

"Go along, go along quick!" said Landry. "I don't want any of them kissing you."

Sylvinet heard no more beyond retreating footsteps. And lest he should be caught eavesdropping by his brother, who was coming back

in his direction, he stepped quickly into the graveyard and let Landry go past.

This discovery was like a stab in Sylvinet's heart. He made no attempt to find out who this girl was whom Landry loved so passionately. It was enough for him to know that there was somebody for whose sake Landry was deserting him, somebody who held all his thoughts, so that he would even conceal them from his brother and deny him his confidence. "He must mistrust me," he reflected, "and this girl he loves so much must be driving him to fear me and hate me. I am not surprised now that he always seems so bored at home, and so restless when I want to go out walking with him. I gave that up, imagining that he had a taste for solitude, but now I'll take good care not to try to trouble him. I'll say nothing: he would bear me a grudge for having surmised what he was unwilling to trust me with. I shall suffer alone, and he will be rejoicing to be free of me."

Sylvinet was as good as his word, and even pushed his promise further than was needful. For not only he did not refrain from any further attempts to keep his brother at his side, but, so as not to annoy him, he even left the house first and went off brooding in solitude in his orchard, having no mind to go further afield. "Because," he reflected, "if I happened to run into Landry anywhere, he'd think I was spying on him and make it very clear that I was making a nuisance of myself."

And gradually his old sorrow, of which he had been partly cured, came back to him, lying so close and heavy on his heart that it very soon showed in his face. His mother rebuked him gently, but being ashamed now at eighteen at having the same weakness of character that he had had at fifteen, he could never bring himself to confess what it was that gnawed at his heart.

It was this which saved him from illness. For God only abandons those who have abandoned themselves ; a man who has the courage to shut in his trouble is more strongly armed against it than he who complains of it. The poor twin assumed as it were a habit of being pale and sad. From time to time he had a few feverish attacks, and, still growing a little, he remained rather delicate and slight of body. He was not very assiduous at work, through no fault of his own, for he knew that work was good for him : he knew too that it was bad enough to vex his father by his melancholy, and was anxious not to annoy him and hinder him by his slackness. So he would turn to at a job, and work in a fury against himself. What's more, he frequently took on more than he could endure, and next day was so tired that he could do no more.

" He'll never be a strong worker," said Barbeau, " but he does what he can. I'd even say he doesn't spare himself enough. That is why I don't want to put him out to work anywhere else. For with this fear he has of being rebuked,

and the small strength that God has given him, he'd soon kill himself, and I'd blame myself all my life through."

Mother Barbeau appreciated these reasons to the full, and did all she could to distract Sylvinet. She consulted several doctors on his health. Some told her that he must be carefully looked after, and mustn't drink anything but milk, because he was feeble ; others, that he must do lots of hard work and drink good wine, because he was feeble and had to be fortified. So Mother Barbeau knew not which to listen to, as always happens when one takes advice from different people.

Fortunately, in her doubt, she obeyed none, and Sylvinet went straight on in the way that God had opened before him. He met with nothing to make him sway to left or to right, and nursed his wound without being crushed beyond bearing, until the time when Landry's love affair caused a stir. And then Sylvinet found his grief augmented by all the pain that was caused to his brother.

## XXVIII

IT was Madelon who let the cat out of the bag. She may have done so without malice, but it was none too pretty a trick that she made of it. She had amply consoled herself for Landry, and as she had spent no great while in loving him, she needed hardly less to forget him. None the less, there had remained graven on her heart a certain rancour that only awaited the right moment to come into the open: for it is all too true that a woman's spite will last longer than her sorrow.

This is how it happened. The fair Madelon, for all her repute as a well-behaved maid and one who kept young men in their proper place, was none the less a great coquette at heart. She was not half so sensible or faithful in her attachments as the poor Cricket of whom so many hard words and auguries had been pronounced. Madelon had already had two lovers, without counting Landry, and she now showed favour to a third. This was her cousin, the younger son of Caillaud of La Priche. So unmistakably did she show this favour that she found herself being watched by her last suitor and was afraid that he might make a rumpus. Not knowing where she could hide to talk at

leisure with her latest, she let him persuade her to go and prattle together in the very dovecote where Landry had his honourable meetings with little Fadette.

Young Caillaud had had a good look for the key of that dovecote, but had not found it because it was always in Landry's pocket. He had not dared to ask anyone for it, having no good reason for his request. And so nobody except Landry was concerned to know its whereabouts. Young Caillaud, thinking it was lost, or that his father must keep it amongst his bunches of keys, did not hesitate to force the door. But the day he did so, it happened that Landry and Fadette were there, and the four lovers looked very foolish at thus finding themselves face to face. This circumstance obliged them all to keep silence and bruit nothing abroad.

But Madelon felt her jealousy and anger return when she saw Landry, who had grown to be one of the finest lads of the whole country-side, and one of the best esteemed, remaining so faithful to little Fadette ever since the fête of St. Andoche. And she resolved to avenge herself. To this end she did not confide anything of her plan to young Caillaud, who was an honest fellow and would not have lent himself to it. But she rallied to her aid one or two young girls of her acquaintance, who were themselves just a little piqued at the way in which Landry seemed to scorn them by no longer inviting them to dance. They began to watch little Fadette so closely

that before long they were quite certain of her intimacy with Landry. And as soon as they had spied on them and seen them together once or twice, they made a great noise about it in the district, telling anyone who would listen (and Heaven knows that scandal lacks no listeners, or tongues to take it up either) that Landry had fallen into bad company in the person of little Fadette.

Then all the young girls joined in as a body. For when a handsome and well-to-do young man gives all his attention to some one person, it is an affront to all the rest. And if there be any chink in that person's armour, they will not fail to find it. And it may also be said that when some piece of mischief is exploited by women, it travels far and fast.

And so, within a fortnight of the adventure at Jacot's tower, without any mention being made of the tower or of Madelon (for she had taken good care to keep in the background and even feigned surprise at learning what she had been the first to discreetly disclose), everybody, great or small, young or old, knew about the love of Landry the twin and Fanchon the Cricket.

In time the rumour even reached the ears of Mother Barbeau. She was sorely put out, and was unwilling to say anything of it to her husband. But Barbeau himself learned of it elsewhere, and Sylvinet, who had discreetly guarded his brother's secret, had the vexation of finding that it was everyone's property.

Well, one evening when Landry was about to leave the Bessonière early, as his custom was, his father, in the presence of his mother, his elder sister and his twin, said to him :

" Don't be in such a hurry to leave us, Landry. I've something to say to you, but I'm waiting for your godfather to be here. For it is before those of the family who have your interests most at heart that I want to ask an explanation of you."

And when the godfather, his uncle Landriche, had arrived, Barbeau went on in these words :

" What I have to say will cause you some shame, Landry. And it won't be without some shame for myself too, though without regret, that I shall have to confess you in front of your family. But I hope the shame will be salutary for you, and cure you of a fancy that might well do you harm.

" It appears that you have made a friendship which dates from the last fête of St. Andoche, close on a year ago now. I heard of it the very first day, for it was inconceivable that you should be seen dancing throughout a whole fête-day with the plainest girl, the most slovenly and ill-famed girl too, in all our district. I did not want to pay any heed, thinking that you had been doing it for amusement ; and yet I did not exactly approve of that, because although one should not associate with doubtful people, still, one must not increase their humiliation or their misfortune in being generally disliked. I

omitted to say anything to you about this, because when I saw you looking sad next day, I thought you were repentant and would do nothing of the sort again. But now for about a week I have been hearing a very different story, and although it comes from persons worthy of credence, I do not wish to believe it unless you confirm it for me. If I have done you wrong by my suspicion, you must impute that only to my feeling for you, and the duty that is mine to keep an eye on your conduct. For if the story is false, it will overjoy me to have your word, and to learn from you that you have been the victim of wrongful treatment at my hands."

"Will you tell me what you accuse me of, Father?" said Landry. "I shall answer you according to the truth and the respect I owe you."

"I thought, Landry, I had said enough to make it plain. You are accused of having evil communications with Mother Fadet's granddaughter. Mother Fadet is a bad woman enough, and there's no need to mention that this unhappy girl's own mother left her husband very scurvily, her children and countryside too, and followed the soldiers. You are accused of walking everywhere with little Fadette, and this would make me fear to find you snared by her in an illicit love that you might live to repent all your days. Now do you understand?"

"I understand, my dear father," answered Landry. "And now allow me one question

before I answer you. Is it because of her family or simply because of herself that you look on Fanchon Fadet as a bad acquaintance for me?"

"One as much as the other, no doubt," said Barbeau, with more severity than he had shown at the start; for he had expected to see Landry looking very sheepish, but found him instead calm and quite determined. "First of all," he went on, "a bad stock is an ugly stain, and no family so well honoured and esteemed as mine would want to make an alliance with the Fadet family. And in addition to that, this Fadet girl in herself does not inspire esteem or confidence in anybody. We've seen her upbringing, and we all know her worth. I've heard tell, and I admit having seen it for myself more than once, that during this past year she has been better behaved, no longer runs about with the little boys, and has checked her mischievous tongue. You see, I don't want to ignore the justice of the case. But that is not enough to convince one that a girl so badly brought up will ever be a decent woman, and knowing her grandmother as I do, I have every ground to fear that there may be a plot staged to extract promises from you and put you in a shameful and embarrassing plight. They are even saying that the girl is pregnant. I would not believe that lightly, but it would greatly pain me, because the blame would be laid on you, and might easily end in a lawsuit and a scandal."

Landry had made up his own mind, from the

first word, to be prudent and to explain everything kindly. But now he lost patience. He blushed a blazing red and stood up.

"Father," he said, "those who told you that lied like dogs. They have so insulted Fanchon Fadet that if I had them here they would have to swallow their words, or else fight me until one of us dropped. Tell them they are cowards and heathen, and that they were traitors in insinuating to you, and we shall have the better of them!"

"Don't get angry like that, Landry," said Sylvinet, overwhelmed by his distress. "Father is not accusing you of having wronged this girl. But he's afraid that she may have been led astray by others, and that in going about with you by day and by night she wants to make people believe that it will be for *you* to make her amends."

## XXIX

HIS brother's voice soothed Landry a little. But he could not let those words pass unchallenged.

"You don't understand anything about it, Sylvinet," he said. "You've always been prejudiced against little Fadette, and you don't know her at all. I care little for anything they may say about myself, but I will not allow things to be said against her. And I want father and mother to know from my own lips that there are not two girls anywhere on earth so honest, and good, and disinterested, as that girl is. If she is unlucky enough to come of a bad family, she has all the more merit in being what she is; and I'd never have believed that Christian souls could fling the misfortune of her birth against her."

"You have all the appearance of reproaching me yourself, Landry," said Barbeau, rising also, to show him that he would not allow the matter to go further between them. "Your resentment shows me that you have a greater fancy for this Fadette than I should have liked. As you are neither ashamed nor sorry, we shall say no more about it. I shall think over what I must do to

save you from a youthful folly. For the present, you must go back to your master's."

"Do not leave us like that," said Sylvinet, holding his brother back as he was moving off. "Father, look at Landry. He's so hurt at having displeased you that he can't speak a word. Grant him your pardon and embrace him, for he'll weep all night long and your displeasure would be too much punishment."

Sylvinet was weeping, and Mother Barbeau was weeping, the eldest sister and the godfather likewise. Only Barbeau himself and Landry had dry eyes; but their hearts were sore, and they had to embrace. The father exacted no promise, knowing well that in matters of love a promise is a chancy thing, and having no mind to compromise his authority. But he made it clear to Landry that the matter was not closed, and that he would return to it. Landry went off, provoked and heartsore. Sylvinet would willingly have followed, but he did not dare, because he supposed that Landry was now going to tell Fadette of his grief. And Sylvinet went to bed so sorrowful that all night long he could only sigh and dream of unhappiness in the family.

Landry went and knocked at little Fadette's door. Mother Fadet had become so deaf that nothing would rouse her when once she was asleep, and for some time Landry had only been able to talk with Fanchon in the evening in the room where the old woman slept with little Jeanet: and there too he was taking a big risk,

for the old witch could not abide him, and would have shown him the door with a broomstick rather than a compliment. Landry told his woes to little Fadette. He found her very humble and very courageous. At first she tried to persuade him that he would do best for his own interests to take back his friendship and think no more of her. But when she saw him more and more distressed and rebellious, she made him promise obedience by holding out hopes for the future.

"Listen, Landry," said she. "I had always a presentiment of what is now happening to us, and I have often wondered what we should do if it should really come to pass. Your father is perfectly right and I don't blame him one bit: it is just his great affection for you that makes him dread seeing you caught up with somebody so utterly unworthy as myself. So I forgive him a little pride and injustice towards me, for we cannot escape the fact that I was wild when I was little; you blamed me for it yourself on the day you began to love me. If I have corrected some of my faults this past year, there hasn't yet been time enough for people to feel confidence in that, as he told you to-day. It will need some time yet, and gradually the prejudices against me will vanish, and the hideous lies they are telling at present will collapse by themselves. Your father and mother will see that I am good and that I don't want to debauch you or twist money out of you. They will recognise the honesty of my

fondness, and we can see each other and talk together without hiding from anyone. But meanwhile you must obey your father, although I'm certain he is going to forbid you to have anything at all to do with me."

"I'll never have the nerve to obey that," said Landry. "I'd rather fling myself in the river."

"Well, if you haven't, I shall have it for you," said little Fadette in reply. "I shall go away myself. I'll leave the district for a while. A couple of months ago I was offered a good place in town. My old granny is so deaf and feeble now that she hardly does any more making or selling of her drugs, and can no longer give consultations. She has a very kind old woman, a relative, who is offering to come and live with her, and who'll look after her well, and my poor little Grasshopper too."

Little Fadette's voice broke there for an instant at the thought of leaving the little boy. For, together with Landry, he was the dearest thing on earth to her. But she picked up her courage and went on:

"He is strong enough to get on without me at present. He's going to make his first communion, and the amusement of going to catechism with the other children will take his mind off the grief of my departure. You must have noticed that he has become quite sensible, and that the other boys hardly ever bait him now. In any case, it *must* be done, do you see, Landry? I *must* be forgotten for a time, for at present there

is a great deal of anger and jealousy against me in the district. When I've been away for a year or two, and come back with good characters and good fame, which I'll earn more readily elsewhere than hereabouts, we shall not be tormented any more, and we'll be better friends than ever."

Landry did not want to listen to this proposal. It only deepened his despair, and he came back to La Priche in a state that would have softened the hardest heart.

Two days later, when he was taking the vat out to the vintage, Young Caillaud spoke to him.

"I think you're angry with me, Landry," he said. "You haven't said a word to me for some time. I dare say you think it was I who spread the tale about your being in love with little Fadette, and I'm vexed that you could believe I'd do anything so mean. As true as God is in Heaven, I never whispered one word of it, and I'll even say it hurt me deeply that you had been caused all this trouble. For I've always had a fancy for you, and never said an insulting word to little Fadette. I can even say this, that ever since what happened at the dovecote, I've had respect for the girl, because she could have chattered on her own account, but was so discreet that no one ever knew anything about it. Yet she could have used the story, if only to get her own back on Madelon: for she knew that Madelon had been at the bottom of all this cackling. But she didn't, and I see, Landry, that

one should not believe in appearances or in reputations. Fadette was thought to be mischievous, but is good ; Madelon was thought to be good, but has been a traitress, not only to Fadette and yourself, but to me as well, for at this moment I have ample reason for complaining of her fidelity."

Landry accepted Young Caillaud's explanations wholeheartedly, and the latter tried to console him as best he could for his disappointment.

" You have had to suffer a great deal, Landry," he said in conclusion. " But you must console yourself for that with the thought of how well Fadette has behaved. It is a fine thing she is doing, to go away, so as to end the distress for your family, and I have just told Fadette so when I said good-bye to her."

" What's that, Caillaud ? What's that ? " exclaimed Landry. " Going away ? Has she gone away ? "

" Didn't you know ? " said Young Caillaud. " I thought it had been agreed between you. I thought you were not seeing her off so as not to incur any blame. Certainly, she has gone. She passed over by our house barely a quarter of an hour ago, with her bundle under her arm. She was making for Château-Meillant. By now she can't have got beyond the Vieille-Ville, or maybe the Côte d'Urmont."

Landry left his goad propped up against the cross-piece of his team, took to his heels, and never stopped until he had overtaken little

Fadette on the sandy path that runs down from the vineyards of Urmont to La Fremelaine.

There, exhausted by his grief and his furious running, he fell across her path. He could not speak, but showed her by signs that she would have to walk over his body before she could leave him.

When he had collected himself a little, little Fadette spoke.

"I wanted to spare you this pain, Landry," she said, "and now you've gone and done everything you can to rob me of my courage. Be a man, now. Don't spoil my determination. I shall need more than you think. When I think of my poor little Jeanet looking for me and crying for me at this moment, I feel so weak that for two straws I'd break my head against these stones. Please, Landry, please help me, instead of turning me from my duty. For if I don't go away to-day, I never shall, and then we shall be undone."

"Fanchon, Fanchon," answered Landry, "you don't need great courage. Your regret is only for a child, who'll soon console himself, just because he is a child. You don't concern yourself about my despair. You don't know what love means. You have none for me, and you're going to forget me in no time, and that will mean that perhaps you will never come back."

"I shall come back, Landry. I call God Himself to witness that I shall come back in a year at the earliest, in two years at latest, and that

I shall forget so little about you that I shall never have any friend or lover but yourself."

"Another friend, possibly, Fanchon. But I don't know about another lover: who can answer to me for that?"

"I shall answer to you for that!"

"You know nothing about it yourself, Fadette. You have never been in love, and when love does come to you, you will hardly have a thought for your poor Landry. Oh! if you had ever loved me in the way that I love you, you would not leave me like this!"

"Do you think so, Landry?" said little Fadette, looking at him with a serious, sorrowful gaze. "Perhaps you don't know what you are saying. For my part, I think that love would bid me do even more than what friendship makes me do."

"Well, if it were really love that prompts you, I should not be so sad about it. Oh, yes, Fanchon! If it were love, I think I should even be happy in my sorrow. I should have confidence in your word, and in my hopes for the future. I should have the same courage that you have. It's true! But it is not love, as you have told me many a time, and I've seen it in your calmness by my side."

"So you believe that it is not love," said little Fadette. "Are you perfectly certain?"

And as he kept watching her, his eyes filled with tears that fell upon his cheeks, while she smiled, smiled in a very strange way.

"Oh, God! Oh, God!" cried Landry, taking her in his arms. "If only I could be wrong about it!"

"But I'm quite sure you are wrong," answered Fadette, still smiling and crying. "I'm quite sure that ever since she was thirteen, the poor Cricket had her eyes for Landry, and had eyes for nobody else, ever. I'm quite sure that when she followed him through the fields and lanes, calling out wild things and teasing words to force him to pay her some attention, she did not really know what she was doing, nor what was driving her towards him. I'm quite sure that when she started to look for Sylvinet one day, knowing that Landry was in trouble, and found him brooding on the river bank with a lamb on his knees, she used a touch of magic on Landry, so that Landry should be forced to show her gratitude. I'm quite sure that when she rounded on him at the Roulettes ford, it was because of her resentment and pain because he had never said a word to her since. I'm quite sure that when she wanted to dance with him, it was because she had lost her head about him and wanted to please him with her pretty dancing. I'm quite sure that when she cried her heart out in the Chaumois quarry, it was because she repented and because of her grief at having displeased him. I'm quite sure, too, that when he wanted to kiss her and she refused, when he talked love to her and she answered with words of friendship, it was because of her fear of losing that love through satisfying

it too soon. And lastly I'm quite sure, that if now she is going away heartbroken, it is because she hopes to come back again worthy of him in the eyes of all, and to be fit to become his wife without bringing grief and humiliation to his family."

This time Landry thought he would go quite mad. He laughed, he shouted, he wept. He kissed Fadette's hands, he kissed her dress. And he would have kissed her feet had she allowed him ; but she raised him, and gave him a true lover's kiss. It was more almost than he could bear, for it was the first he had ever had, from her or from anyone else. And as he fell almost swooning after it on the side of the path, she picked up her bundle, red and confused as she was, and escaped, forbidding him to follow and vowing to him that she would come back.

# XXX

LANDRY yielded, and returned to th gathering of the grapes. But he was sur prised not to find himself wretched, as he hac expected. Such is the great joy of knowing oneself to be loved, and such is one's faith when one is wholeheartedly in love. He was so astonished and pleased that he could not help telling Young Caillaud about it. He too was astonished, and admired little Fadette for her strength in resisting all weakness or imprudence since loving Landry and winning his love.

"I am glad to see that the girl has so many qualities," he said. "As a matter of fact I have never thought ill of her myself, and can even say that if she had paid any attentions to me, she would not have been displeasing to me. Those eyes of her always made her seem pretty rather than plain to me ; and for some time now, everyone could easily have seen, if she had wanted to make herself pleasing, that every day she was becoming more agreeable. But she loved you and you alone, Landry, and was merely content with not being displeasing to others. She sought no other approval than yours, and I tell you a woman of that character would have suited me very well. What's more, I always thought she

had a good heart, even when I knew her just as a little girl, and that if people were asked separately to say truthfully and on their honour what they thought of her, they would all be obliged to give her a good character. But the world is so made that if two or three people get on the tracks of another, everyone will join in the hunt, and fling stones at the victim and give him a bad name without really knowing why. And all as if just for the joy of crushing someone who cannot defend himself."

Landry found great solace in hearing this argument of Young Caillaud's, and from that day on they were close friends. He consoled himself slightly for his sorrows by confiding them in Caillaud, and even went so far as to say to him one day :

" Don't think any more about Madelon. She's a good-for-nothing, and has done us both harm, Caillaud. You're the same age as myself, and there's no hurry for you to marry. Now, I've a pretty little sister, Nanette, as pretty as a star, well brought-up, kind, sweet, and nearly sixteen. Come and see us more often. My father has a high opinion of you, and when you get to know our Nanette properly, you'll see that you could not do better than become my brother-in-law."

" Well, I shan't say no," answered Young Caillaud. "And if the girl is not destined otherwise, I'll come over to your place every Sunday."

On the evening of Fanchon Fadet's departure, Landry was anxious to go and see his father. He

wanted to tell him how honourably this girl whom he had judged so harshly had behaved, and at the same time to make his submission for the present, although with due reservations as regards the future. His heart was heavy as he passed Mother Fadet's house. But he plucked up his courage at the thought that, had it not been for Fadette's departure, he would never perhaps have known for a long time this happiness of knowing her love for him. And he caught sight of Mother Fanchette, Fanchon's relative and godmother, who had come to tend the old woman and the boy in her place. She was seated before the door, with the Grasshopper on her knees. Poor Jeanet was crying, and refused to go to bed because his Fanchon had not come home yet, he said, and it was for her to make him say his prayers and put him to bed. Mother Fanchette was comforting him as well as she could, and it gave Landry pleasure to hear that she spoke to him very kindly and fondly. But at the sight of Landry passing, he escaped from Mother Fanchette's arms, at the risk of breaking a leg, and rushed to throw himself into Landry's arms, kissing him and questioning him, and beseeching him to bring back his Fanchon. Landry picked him up, and, through his own tears, consoled him as best he could. He wanted to give him a bunch of fine grapes that he was carrying in a little basket from Mother Caillaud to Mother Barbeau. But Jeanet, usually so greedy, would have none of them unless Landry would promise to go and

look for his Fanchon ; and Landry had to make the promise, with a sigh, for otherwise the child would not have yielded to Mother Fanchette.

Barbeau was hardly prepared for little Fadette's great determination. But it pleased him, although, as a just and kind-hearted man, he felt some regret at what he had brought about.

" I am pained, Landry," said he, " that you have not had the courage to renounce her company. Had you done your duty, you would not have caused her departure. God grant that the child come to no harm in her new condition, and that her absence does not harm her grandmother or her little brother. For though there be many who speak ill of her, yet there are also some who stand up for her and assure me that to her family she is very good and very amenable. If the story of her being with child is a lie, we shall know, and we shall defend her as we are bound to. If, by misfortune, it is true, and you are responsible for it, Landry, we shall help her and not let her fall into want. But all I demand of you, Landry, is that you never make her your wife."

" Father," said Landry, " we are viewing this matter differently, you and I. If I were guilty of what you think, I should on the contrary be asking your leave to marry her. But little Fadette is as innocent as my sister Nanette, so I ask nothing more of you than your pardon for the pain I have caused you. We shall talk of her some other time, as you promised me."

Barbeau had perforce to put up with this condition of not pressing his insistence further. He was too prudent to rush matters abruptly, and had to count himself content with what he had gained.

From that moment there was no further mention of little Fadette at the Bessonière. Even her name was avoided, for Landry would blush and then turn instantly pale when it slipped from someone in his presence, and it was very easy to see that he had not forgotten her any more than on the first day.

## XXXI

JUST at first Sylvinet felt a certain selfish satisfaction at the news of Fadette's departure, and flattered himself that henceforth his twin would care for nobody but himself, and would desert him for nobody. But it was not so at all. Landry really did love Sylvinet better than anyone in the world after Fadette, but he could not take pleasure in his society for long, because of Sylvinet's obstinate aversion to Fanchon. Whenever Landry tried to talk of this and to make him share his interests, Sylvinet became aggrieved, and reproached him for persisting in an idea so repugnant to their parents and so painful to himself. Whence, Landry mentioned it no more. But as he could not live without talking of her, he shared his time between Young Caillaud and little Jeanet. He would take out the latter for walks, make him repeat his catechism, instruct him and comfort him as well as he could. And when people found him with the child, they might have made fun of him, had they dared. But Landry never let himself be made fun of in any connection, and besides, he was more proud than ashamed of showing his fondness for Fanchon Fadet's little

brother ; in that way he made his protest against those who went about saying that Barbeau, wise man, had made short work of *that* love-affair.

When Sylvinet discovered that his brother did not come back to him as often as he could have wished, he was reduced to shifting his jealous gaze on to little Jeanet and Young Caillaud. Seeing, on the other hand, that his sister Nanette, whose gentle care and pretty ways had been hitherto a constant solace to him, was beginning to take pleasure in the company of the said Young Caillaud, whose inclinations were highly approved by both families, poor Sylvinet, whose wild idea it was to claim the sole affection of all who were dear to him, fell into a consuming melancholy, a strange languor ; his mind was so sadly clouded that nobody could find any way of pleasing him. He never laughed, he enjoyed nothing, he could hardly even work now, such was his pining and increasing feebleness. At last fears were entertained for his very life, for he was hardly ever free from fever, and when it seized him a little more violently than usual, he would say things with scant sense in them and cruel to the hearts of his parents. He declared that nobody loved him—him, who had always been petted and spoiled more than any of the family. He longed for death, saying that he was good for nothing, that he was treated kindly just out of compassion for his fate, but that he was a burden on his parents, and that the greatest mercy God could show them would be to rid them of him.

Barbeau himself would hear these unchristian sentiments, and would sometimes rate him severely for them. But it was of no avail. Other times he would implore him, with tears in his eyes, to show more trust in their fondness. But that was worse. Sylvinet wept, repented, asked pardon of his mother, his father, his twin, of the whole family ; and then the fever returned with all the greater severity for his having given vent to the excessive tenderness of his sickly heart.

Doctors were consulted afresh. They gave scanty advice. It was clear from their faces that they believed the whole trouble to arise from the mere fact of the twins' relationship, which involved the death of one or the other, logically of the weaker. They also consulted the bath-keeper of Clavières, the most cunning woman of the canton after Mother Sagette, now dead, and Mother Fadet, who was declining into her second childhood. And this skilful woman answered Mother Barbeau :

" There is only one thing that can save your child, and that is that he should love women."

"And that's just it," said Mother Barbeau. " He cannot abide them. There never was a lad so proud and good, and the moment his twin began to have thoughts of love, he had nothing but ill to say of all the girls we know. He blames them all, because one of them (and unluckily not one of the best) stole his brother's heart, as he will have it."

"Well," said the bath-woman, who had great judgment in all ailments of body or mind, "the day that your son Sylvinet does love a woman, he will love her even more wildly than he loves his brother. That's what I foretell. He has an excess of fondness in his heart, and lavishing it too constantly upon his twin has made him almost forgetful of his being a man; thereby he has gone against the divine law, which ordains that a man shall cherish a woman above father and mother, above brothers and sisters. But take heart: nature will surely assert herself before long, however backward he may be in this direction. And do not hesitate to give him in marriage the woman that he loves, whether she be poor, or plain, or of bad repute: for from all I can see, he will never in his life love more than one. His heart is too clinging for that, and if it needs a miracle of nature to part him even a little from his brother, it will need an even greater one to turn him from the person he comes to prefer to his brother."

So sagacious did this counsel seem to Barbeau that he tried to get Sylvinet to frequent such houses as had handsome and worthy girls of marriageable age. But although Sylvinet was a good-looking and well-bred youth, his air of sorrowful preoccupation made no appeal to girlish hearts. They made no advances to him, and his shyness and fear of them made him imagine that he hated them.

Old Caillaud, who was a close friend of the

family and one of their best counsellors, then started a fresh idea.

" I've always told you," said he, " that absence is the best cure. Look at Landry ! He was out of his wits over little Fadette, and yet now that Fadette has gone, he's less melancholy even than he used often to be : for we had noticed his sadness though we did not know its cause. But nowadays he seems completely sensible and resigned. And it would be just the same with Sylvinet if he saw nothing at all of his brother for five or six months. Now, I'll tell you how to separate them quite harmlessly. My farm at La Priche is going very well ; but that property of my own, over at Arthon, is going very ill, because for a year or so my tenant has been ill and cannot get things straight. I don't want to turn him out, because he is really a very deserving man. But if I could send him a good labourer to help him, he would get things better again, because his illness is only due to fatigue and excessive zeal. If you consent, I'll send Landry over to my property for the rest of the season. We'll send him off without telling Sylvinet that it is for any length of time. Nay, we shall say it is for a week. And when the first week is over, we'll talk about another week, and so on until he gets used to it. Follow my advice, instead of always flattering the whims of a child you have been too kind to, and made too much a master in your house."

Barbeau inclined to fall in with this, but Mother Barbeau took fright. She was afraid it

might be the death of Sylvinet. They had to come to terms with her. She insisted that first of all they should make the experiment of keeping Landry at home for a fortnight, to see whether his brother would not be cured by having him with him all the time. If it turned out that he grew worse, she would yield to Caillaud's advice.

This was done. Landry was glad enough to come and spend the required time at the Bessonière, and he was brought on the pretext that his father needed help to thresh the rest of his corn. Landry put all his heart and soul into winning his brother's pleasure. He saw him continually, slept in the same bed, tended him as if he had been a child. The first day, Sylvinet was overjoyed. But the next, he declared that Landry wearied of his society, and Landry could not undeceive him. The third, Sylvinet lost his temper because the Grasshopper came to see Landry, and Landry had not the nerve to send him away. In the end, he had to give it up, as Sylvinet was becoming more and more unfair, exacting, and jealous of nothing at all. And then they considered putting Old Caillaud's plan into operation ; and although Landry had no great desire to go amongst strangers over at Arthon, for he was very fond of his own place, his own family, and his own masters, nevertheless he yielded to what he was advised to do in the interest of his brother.

## XXXII

ON this occasion Sylvinet nearly died on the first day. But next day he was calmer, and on the third the fever left him. At first he was resigned, and then resolved, and by the end of the first week it was clear that his brother's absence was better for him than his company. In the secret reasonings of his jealousy he found a motive for being almost glad of Landry's departure: "at least," he told himself, "Landry will not instantly make new friendships in this place where he has gone knowing nobody. He will weary a little, and think of me, and regret me. And when he comes back, he'll love me all the more."

Landry had already been away for three months, and little Fadette for about a year, when suddenly she came back to the village. Her grandmother had had a stroke. She tended the old woman kindly and zealously, but age is the worst of all maladies, and after a fortnight old Mother Fadet passed quietly away.

Three days later, when the poor old woman's body had been taken to the cemetery, Fadette was seated sitting very sorrowfully in front of her little fire, after setting the house to rights,

undressing her brother and putting him to bed, and kissing her godmother good-night, as she went off to bed in the other room. The fire had a gleam in it, and she could hear the cricket singing in the chimney. It seemed to be singing to her the old words :

*I bring my hood, I bring my cloak—*
*There's love among the fairy folk !*

The rain was falling and rattling on the window-panes, and Fanchon was thinking of her lover, when there was a knock at the door and a voice said :

" Fanchon Fadet, are you there ? Do you know who I am ? "

She was not slow to open, and great was her joy when she found herself clasped in the arms of her loving Landry. He had heard news of the old grandmother's illness and Fanchon's return. Unable to resist his longing to see her, he came at night so as to go back at dawn. And so they passed the whole night talking by the fireside, very seriously and properly, for little Fadette reminded Landry that her grandmother's death-bed was hardly cold, and it was neither the time nor the place to forget themselves in bliss. But despite their good resolutions they were delighted to be together, and to find that they loved each other more than they had ever loved before.

As day drew near, however, Landry began to lose heart. He begged Fanchon to hide him in

her loft so that he could see her again the next night. But now, as always, she brought him back to reason. She gave him to understand that their separation was not for long now, for she had decided to remain at home.

"I have reasons for that," she said, "which I shall tell you of later; they will not injure the hope I cherish of our marriage. Go and finish the work your master has entrusted you with, because, according to what my godmother tells me, it will help to cure your brother if he does not see you for yet a while."

"That's the only reason that could bring me to leave you," answered Landry. "For my poor brother has caused me much grief, and I fear he will cause me much more. You have wisdom, now, Fanchonette; you ought to find some means of curing him."

"I know none but reasoning," she answered. "For it is his mind that makes his body sick, and if one could be healed, the other would be healed. But he has such a dislike for me that I shall never have a chance of speaking to him and consoling him."

"And yet you are so clever, Fadette, and talk so well, and you have such a knack of persuasion when you take the trouble, that if you could but speak with him for an hour, he would feel the benefit. Try it, I beseech you. Don't be kept off by his pride and bad temper. Force him to listen to you. Make this effort for my sake, Fanchon mine, and for the happy issue of our

love as well: for my father's opposition will not be the least of our impediments."

Fanchon gave him her word, and they parted, after repeating ten score of times that they loved each other, and would love each other for evermore.

## XXXIII

NOBODY round about knew that Landry had been there. Anyone who had told Sylvinet as much would have made him relapse into his sickness, for he would never have forgiven his brother for coming to see Fadette without seeing him.

Two days later Fadette dressed herself with the utmost care. She was no longer penniless, and her mourning dress was of good fine serge. She went right through the village of La Cosse, and having grown so much, was not recognised at first by those who saw her going past. Her appearance had greatly improved whilst she had been in the town. Better nourished and better housed, she had gained the colour and plumpness suitable to her age, and could no longer be mistaken for a boy in girl's clothes, so handsome and pleasant to look on was her figure. Love and happiness, too, had given her face and person that something which can be seen but not described. She was, in fact, if not the prettiest girl in the world, as Landry imagined her, at least the most attractive, best built, freshest, and perhaps

the most desirable of all the girls in the district.

She carried a large basket on her arm, and entering the Bessonière, asked to speak to Barbeau. Sylvinet was the first to catch sight of her, and he turned away, so displeased was he at the meeting. But she asked him so straightforwardly where his father was that he could not but answer her, and led her over to the barn, where Barbeau was working. Little Fadette asked him to take her to some place where they could talk privately, so he shut the door of the barn and told her she could say everything she desired.

She did not allow herself to be put out by Barbeau's cool reception. She sat down on one bale of straw, he on another, and then spoke thus :

" I dare say, Père Barbeau, that my poor grandmother used to bear you a grudge, as you did against me ; but it is none the less true that I know you for the fairest and most trustworthy man in all our district. There's only one opinion about that, and my granny herself, for all her blame of your pride, did you that justice too. What is more, I have been friends for a very long time with your son Landry, as you know, and many a time he has talked about you. And I know from him, even better than from anyone else, what you are and what is your worth. That is why I come to ask you to help me and give me your trust."

" Go on, Fadette," answered Barbeau. " I

never refused help to anyone, and if it be something that my conscience will allow, you can count on me."

"It is this," said Fadette, lifting her basket and placing it between Barbeau's legs. "My poor granny made some money during her lifetime, with her consultations and her sale of remedies, more money than anyone thought. But she spent hardly anything and never invested any of it, so nobody knew what she had stowed away in an old hole of her cellar. She often showed me this, saying: 'When I'm gone, you'll find what I've left in there. It's your property, your own, together with your brother; and if I stint you just now, it's so that you may have all the more some day. But don't let the lawyers lay a finger on it, or they'll swallow it up for you with their expenses. Keep hold of it when you have it, and hide it all your life, so as to have it to use when you're old and not go in want.

"When my grandmother, poor soul, had been buried, I obeyed her command. I took the key of the cellar, and pulled out the bricks in the wall where she had shown me. There I found what I am bringing you in that basket, begging you to dispose of it for me as best you know how, when you have met the needs of the law, of which I know almost nothing, and save me from the great expenses I am afraid of."

"I am obliged by your confidence, Fadette," said Barbeau, without opening the basket, in spite of his curiosity, "but I have no right to

receive your money or supervise your affairs. I am not your guardian, you know. No doubt your grandmother left a will?"

"She made no will, and the guardian the law gives me is my mother. Well, as you know, I have heard nothing of her for a long time now, and I know not whether she be alive or dead, poor soul. After her, I have no relatives except my godmother Fanchette. She is an honest and worthy woman, but quite incapable of handling my property, even of keeping it and holding it tight. She could never help talking about it and showing it all round, and I should be afraid of her investing it wrongly, or else that by letting the inquisitive handle it she would let it shrink without taking any precautions: for my poor godmother is not even able to keep count of the money."

"So it is a substantial affair?" said Barbeau, whose gaze, willy-nilly, was fixing itself on the cover of the basket.

And he took it by the handle to test its weight. But he was amazed at how heavy it was, and said:

"If it's old iron, it doesn't need much to load a horse."

Little Fadette felt inwardly a mischievous joy in seeing his intense desire to examine the basket. She moved as if to open it, but Barbeau would have felt a loss of dignity in allowing her to do so.

"It is no business of mine," he said, "and as

I can't take charge of it, I ought not to know about your private affairs."

"But you must at least do me this small service," said Fadette. "I am not much more skilled than my godmother in counting beyond a hundred. And then I don't know the value of all the old coins and the new, and I can trust only yourself to tell me whether I am rich or poor, and to let me know the exact sum of my possessions."

"Well, let's see," said Barbeau, holding back no longer. "It is no great favour you're asking, and I cannot refuse."

Whereupon little Fadette whipped off the twin lids of the basket and picked out two large bags, each big enough to hold a couple of thousand *écus*.

"Well! That's good enough!" said Barbeau. "Here's a little dowry that will bring more than one young man looking for you."

"That's not all," said little Fadette. "There's something else there, at the bottom of the basket, that I don't really know about."

And she drew out an eelskin purse which she poured out into Barbeau's hat. There were a hundred golden louis of the old coinage. They made the worthy man's eyes stare like two saucers. And when he had counted them and put them back into the eelskin, she drew out another of the same capacity, then a third, and a fourth, and in the end there was not much less

than forty thousand francs in that basket, in gold and silver and small change.

It was about a third as much again as all that Barbeau himself possessed in his buildings, and as country people seldom realise their property in actual coin, he had never seen so much money all at once.

Now, however honest and disinterested a peasant may be, it cannot be said that the sight of money hurts him. For a moment Barbeau's forehead was running with sweat. When he had counted it all up he said :

" You need only twenty-two *écus* to have forty times a thousand francs ; and that is as good as saying that you inherit for yourself two thousand good ringing *pistoles*. It makes you the best match in the district, little Fadette, and it means that your brother, the Grasshopper, can quite well be lame and sickly all his life. He'll be able to go visiting his property in his gig. So cheer up, you can count yourself rich, and let people know it if you want to get a fine husband quickly."

" I'm in no great hurry for that," said Fadette. " On the contrary, I beg you to keep my secret concerning all this money. I may be plain, but I have a fancy not to be wooed for my money, but for my good heart and fair fame. And as I had a bad name in this countryside, I want to spend some time hereabouts to let people see for themselves that I do not at all deserve it."

"As for your plain looks, Fadette," said Bar-

beau, raising his eyes, which all this while he had kept glued on the basket, "let me tell you, in all honesty, that you're mightily altered, and that you've altered so much for the better in town that nowadays you pass for a very nice girl indeed. And as for your bad name, if you don't deserve it—as I like to think you don't—then I approve your idea of waiting a while and concealing your wealth: for there will be no lack of people whom it would dazzle into wanting to marry you, without their having beforehand that esteem which a woman must look for in her husband.

"And now, as to your wish that I should take charge of this for you, that would be against the law, and might later expose me to suspicion and incrimination. For mischievous tongues are plentiful. What's more, even if you have the right to dispose of what belongs to you, that does not mean you can deal with what belongs to your brother, who's under age. All I can do will be to have a consultation on your behalf without giving your name. I shall then let you know the means of putting this heritage of yours and your mother's in safety and to good profit, without letting it go through the hands of the petti-foggers, who are not all very faithful stewards. So take it all back, and hide it again until you hear from me. I am ready, if you like, when the time comes, to give testimony before the administrators of your co-heir regarding the figure of the sum we have counted; I shall write it up in a corner of my barn in case I forget it."

That was all that little Fadette wanted, that Barbeau should know the rights of the business. If she felt just a little proud of her riches before him, it was because he could no longer accuse her of trying to exploit Landry.

## XXXIV

WHEN Barbeau saw Fadette's caution, and realised her cleverness, he was less concerned to arrange for the care and investment of her money than to ascertain what sort of repute she had made for herself at Château-Meillant, where she had spent the past year. For although this dowry tempted him, and inclined him to overlook her unhappy origin, he was not so ready to make allowances as regards the honour of the girl he desired as his daughter-in-law. So he went to Château-Meillant himself and made conscientious inquiries. He was told, not only that little Fadette had not come there pregnant, and had not given birth to a child, but further, that her conduct there had been beyond even the slightest reproach. She had been servant to an old and religious lady of noble birth, who had taken pleasure in making her a companion rather than a maid, so well-endowed had she found the girl in good conduct, good morals, and good sense. She missed her greatly, and said that she was a perfect Christian, brave, thrifty, clean, careful, and so amiable in character that she would never find her like again. And as this lady was well-to-do, she engaged in works of charity, in which Fadette had been a wonderful

assistant to her in the care of the sick and the preparation of remedies, and by learning a number of fine secrets which her mistress had learned in her convent, in the days before the Revolution.

Barbeau was very pleased. He returned to La Cosse determined to investigate things as fully as he could. He assembled his family, and charged his eldest children, his brothers, and all his female relatives, to make prudent inquiries on Fadette's behaviour since she reached years of discretion ; then, if all the scandal that had been spoken of her seemed to rise solely from childish pranks, it could simply be laughed at. But if anyone could declare that she had been seen committing a wrong or behaving with indecency, he must needs uphold his command to Landry to forego her company. This inquiry was carried out with the discretion he desired, and without the question of dowry being whispered abroad, for of that he had not said a word, not even to his wife.

Meanwhile little Fadette lived retired in her little house. She refrained from making any changes there, except in so far as she kept it so clean that you could have seen yourself in her poor bits of furniture. She dressed the Grasshopper properly, and quite inconspicuously put him, and her godmother and herself as well, on to a plentiful diet. This soon showed results in the child. He picked up his strength as well as was possible, and his health was soon all that could be desired. Happiness also made speedy

improvement in his temperament. Freed from the threats and scoldings of his grandmother, and meeting only with caresses, kind words, and good treatment, he became a fetching little boy, full of quaint and lovable ideas, incapable now of displeasing anyone, despite his limp and his flattened nose.

And, on the other hand, there was so great a change in the person and habits of Fanchon Fadet that ill-natured gossip was forgotten, and more than one lad, seeing her walking along with such lightness and such charming grace, wished her period of mourning over, that he might go courting her and take her to the dance.

Sylvinet Barbeau was alone in refusing to alter his opinion. He saw quite clearly that some sort of trickery was going on about her in his family, for his father was for ever talking about her, and when he could extract a withdrawal of some old lie about Fanchon, would congratulate himself on Landry's behalf, saying that he could not suffer his son to be accused of leading an innocent child astray.

There was talk, too, of Landry's imminent return, and Barbeau seemed anxious that this should be agreed to by Old Caillaud. At last, Sylvinet saw that there was no longer going to be the old opposition to Landry's love-affair, and his sorrow returned. The weathercock of opinion had lately veered round in Fadette's favour. She was not supposed to be rich, but she was pleasing, and for that reason she was all the

more detestable to Sylvinet, who saw in her his rival for Landry's affections.

Occasionally Barbeau let drop the word "marriage" before him, and said that his twins would soon be at an age to be thinking about that. The mere idea of Landry's marriage had always been heartbreaking to Sylvinet, the last word, as it were, in their process of separation. His fever returned, and again his mother consulted the doctors.

One day she met Mother Fanchette, who heard the plaints of Mother Barbeau's distress, and asked her why she was going to seek advice so far afield and spending so much money when she had close at hand a wise woman more skilful than any in the district, and one who declined to work for money as her grandmother had done, but simply for love of God and her neighbour. And she named little Fadette.

Mother Barbeau spoke of this to her husband. He showed no opposition, and told her that at Château-Meillant Fadette had been highly esteemed for her great knowledge, and that people came from all parts to consult her no less than her mistress.

So Mother Barbeau invited Fadette to come and see Sylvinet, who kept his bed, and to give him her aid.

More than once had Fanchon sought an opportunity of talking to him, as she had promised Landry to do, and he had never given her the chance. So she awaited no second bidding

and ran to see the unhappy lad. She found him asleep, in a fever, and begged the family to leave her alone with him. As it is customary for wise women to work in secret, nobody said her nay, and they left the room.

First of all, Fadette laid her hand on the twin's, which hung over the edge of the bed. But so gently did she do it, that he noticed nothing although he slept so lightly that a buzzing fly would wake him. Sylvinet's hand was fiery hot, and grew hotter still in little Fadette's. He stirred a little, but did not try to withdraw his hand, and then Fadette laid her other hand on his brow, as gently as the first. He stirred still more. But little by little he grew calm, and she felt both the hand and head of her patient growing cooler from minute to minute, and his sleep, too, becoming quiet as a little child's. She remained beside him thus until she saw him becoming wakeful, and she then retired behind his curtain, and left the room and the house, saying to Mother Barbeau :

" Go and see your son and give him something to eat : his fever has gone. Above all, don't talk to him about me at all if you want me to cure him. I'll come back this evening, at the time you told me his fever grew worse, and I'll try again to banish this wretched trouble."

## XXXV

MOTHER BARBEAU was greatly astonished to see Sylvinet's fever gone. She hastened to give him something to eat, and he took some nourishment with a slight show of appetite. And as the fever had held him in its grip for six days now, and all that time he had refused food, there was much marvelling at little Fadette's skill, for without waking him, and without making him drink any potions, she had already brought about this turn for the better, simply by virtue of her entreaties, as it was thought.

With evening the fever came on again, and with violence. Sylvinet grew drowsy, showed signs of wandering as he dozed, and on waking seemed afraid of the people around him.

Fadette returned and stayed with him alone for a good long time, just as in the morning, using no magic beyond the holding of his hands and head, and cool breathing beside his gentle flaming cheeks.

And as in the morning, she freed him from his fever and his delirium. When she went away, still advising that no mention of her aid should

be made to Sylvinet, he was found peacefully asleep, the flush gone from his face, and with all the appearance of one cured.

I know not how Fadette had found this idea. It came to her by luck and by experience. Ten times or more she had brought back her little brother Jeanet from the very brink of death simply by cooling him with her hands and her breath, or by warming him likewise when the fever left him shivering. It was her notion that the affection and will of someone in good health, and the actual touch of a pure and living hand, are capable of driving the trouble away, when that someone is endowed with a certain spirit and a deep faith in the goodness of God. And all the time that she performed her laying-on of hands, she was inwardly saying earnest prayers to God. What she had done for her little brother, what she was now doing for Landry's brother, she would not have been willing to try on anybody less dear to her ; for she thought that the main virtue in this remedy of hers was the strength of affection that one's heart held out to the sick person, and without that God would give you no power over the trouble.

So, when little Fadette was thus charming Sylvinet's fever, she was praying to God in the same words that she had used when she had charmed her little brother's fever : " O God, make the health of my body to pass thence into this ailing body, and as gentle Jesus offered up His life to redeem the souls of all mankind, so

may Thou take my life if it be Thy will, that it may be given to this sick one beside me. Gladly do I yield it up in exchange for the healing I ask of Thee."

Little Fadette had thought more than once of trying the power of this prayer beside her grandmother's death-bed. But she had not dared, because it seemed to her that the life of the soul and of the body were both fading out in this aged woman, through the effects of age and the natural laws that are God's own will. And little Fadette, who, as may be seen, put into her charms more religion than devilry, would have feared the displeasure of God by asking Him something which He did not usually grant to other Christians save by miracle.

Whether the remedy in itself were sovereign or useless, it is very certain that it freed Sylvinet of his fever in the course of three days, and that he would never have known how, had he not woken up somewhat abruptly on her last visit, and seen her leaning over him and gently withdrawing her hands.

His first thought was that this was a vision, and he shut his eyes again to avoid seeing it. But when later he asked his mother whether Fadette had not been feeling his head and pulse, or whether this had been a dream, Mother Barbeau, who had by now been told something of her husband's projects and was anxious that Sylvinet should lose his grudge against the girl, answered that she had really been there, for three days,

morning and evening, and that she had very marvellously dispersed his fever by her tending of him in secret.

Sylvinet did not seem to believe a word of it. His fever, he said, had gone of its own accord, and Fadette's words and secrets were vain and foolish. For several days he remained very peaceful and strong, and Barbeau thought he had better take the chance of telling him something of the possibility of his brother's marriage, but without naming the girl he had in view.

"You need not hide the name of the bride you intend for him," answered Sylvinet. "I know quite well that it is this Fadette who has bewitched you all."

And, indeed, Barbeau's secret inquiries had proved so favourable to little Fadette that he felt no further compunctions and was anxious to be able to summon Landry home. He feared nothing now but the jealousy of the twin, and strove to cure him of this whim by telling him that his brother would never be happy without Fadette. To which Sylvinet replied:

"Go on, then. For my brother *must* be happy."

But as yet they dared go no further, because Sylvinet fell sick of his fever again as soon as he had approved the project.

## XXXVI

BARBEAU, however, was afraid that little Fadette might still harbour some rancour against him for his former injustice, and that to console herself for Landry's absence she might be thinking of someone else. He had tried to speak to her about Landry when she came to the Bessonière to treat Sylvinet. But she had feigned not to hear, and he felt embarrassed.

At last, one morning, he made up his mind, and went to see little Fadette.

" Fanchon Fadet," he said to her, " I came to ask you a question which I want you to answer truthfully and on your honour. Before your grandmother's death, had you any idea of the great wealth she was bound to leave you ? "

" Yes, I had some idea," said little Fadette in reply. " Because I had often seen her counting gold and silver, and never saw anything but pennies going out of the house. And also because when the other girls laughed at my ragbag clothes, she often said to me : ' Never mind that, my girl. You'll be richer than any of them, and the day will come when you can be

dressed in silk from top to toe if you're so minded.' "

"And then," Barbeau continued, "did you ever tell Landry of this? Might it not be on account of your money that my son made a show of being in love with you?"

"As for that," answered little Fadette, "I have always had a mind to be loved for my charms alone—I have some that none have ever denied me—and I was not so foolish as to go and tell Landry that my charms were in eel-skin bags! Yet I could have told him so without danger to myself, for Landry loved me so honestly and wholeheartedly that he never once vexed himself with whether I was rich or penniless."

"And since your grandmother's death, my dear Fanchon," Barbeau went on, "can you give me your word of honour that Landry has never been informed by you, or by anyone else, of how matters stand?"

"I give you my word," said Fadette. "As truly as I love God, you are the only person in the world besides myself who has any knowledge of this matter."

"And as for Landry's love, do you think, Fadette, that he has kept it intact for you still? Have you received any token since your grandmother's death that he has not been unfaithful to you?"

"I have received the surest," she answered. "For I will confess that he came to see me three

days after her death, and swore he would die of grief if he did not have me for his wife."

"How did you answer him, Fadette?"

"That, Barbeau, I should not be obliged to tell. But to satisfy you, I will. I answered him that we had still time enough to be thinking of marriage, and that I would not like to decide in favour of a lad who courted me against his parents' wish."

And as Fadette said that in a rather proud and independent tone, she made Barbeau feel apprehensive.

"I have no right to cross-question you, Fanchon Fadet," he said, "and I know not whether you have the intention of making my son happy or unhappy for the whole of his life. But I do know that he loves you, loves you terribly. And were I in your place, I would say to myself that Landry Barbeau had loved me when I was clad in rags, when I was rejected by everyone, and when his own parents themselves were so far misled as to treat it as a crime; that he found me pretty when everyone denied me even the hope of becoming so; that he loved me despite the penalties that love involved for him; that he loved me in absence as truly as when I was near at hand; in fact, that he loved me so well that I cannot doubt him and can never wish to take any other for a husband."

"I told myself all that long ago," answered little Fadette. "But I tell you again, I should feel the greatest repugnance to entering a family

who would blush for me and would only yield through weakness and compassion."

"If it be only that which holds you back, you must decide, Fanchon," replied Barbeau. "For Landry's family value you and want you. Don't think that they have changed because you are rich. It was not your poverty that made us repulse you, but the bad things that were said about you. If they had been well-founded, I should never have consented, not even if Landry had died of it, to call you my daughter-in-law. But I wanted to know the truth about this gossip, so I went specially to Château-Meillant. I made the most minute inquiries in that district and in our own, and I now realise that I was told lies, and that you are a good honest girl, just as Landry declared with such warmth. And so, Fanchon Fadet, I have come to ask you to marry my son, and if you say *yes*, he shall be here in a week's time."

Little Fadette had foreseen this overture clearly enough, and it left her very well pleased. But she was anxious not to show her satisfaction, because she desired the proper respect of her future family, and so made only a guarded reply. And then Barbeau said to her :

"I can see, my girl, that your heart still harbours something against me and mine. Do not insist that an older man should make excuses to you. Be content with an honest word, and when I tell you that you will be loved and esteemed amongst us, remember that it is old Barbeau who

is saying so, and he never yet told anyone a lie. Come, will you give the kiss of peace to the guardian you chose for yourself, or to the father who wishes to adopt you ? "

Little Fadette could hold out no longer ; she flung both arms round Barbeau's neck, and his old heart was gladdened to its depths.

## XXXVII

THE arrangements were quickly made. The marriage was to take place as soon as Fanchon's mourning was over, and the sole question now was of Landry's return. But when Mother Barbeau came to see Fanchon that same evening, to kiss her and give her her blessing, she objected that the news of his brother's forthcoming marriage had caused Sylvinet to relapse into his fever, and asked that they should wait a few days longer that he might be cured or consoled.

"You made a mistake, Mother Barbeau," said little Fadette, "in telling Sylvinet that it was not a dream when he saw me beside him when he came out of his fever. His mind now will fight against mine, and I shan't have the same virtue again of being able to heal him in his sleep. It is even possible that he will repulse me, and that my presence will make his trouble worse."

"I don't think so," answered Mother Barbeau. "For when he felt ill just now, he went to bed saying, 'Where is that Fadette? I believe she *did* do me good. Won't she come back again?' And I told him I was coming to fetch you. He seemed pleased at that, and even impatient."

"I'm going," answered Fadette. "Only this time I must set about it differently: for I tell you, what succeeded with him when he didn't know I was there will not work any more."

"And aren't you taking any drugs or remedies?" said Mother Barbeau.

"No," said Fadette. "His body is not very ill. My concern is with his mind. I am going to try to make mine enter into it, but I don't promise you I'll succeed. What I can promise is to wait for Landry's arrival with patience, and not to ask you to tell him before we have done everything to restore his brother to health. Landry commended him so strongly to me that I know he will approve my postponing his return and his contentment."

When Sylvinet saw little Fadette at his bedside he seemed displeased, and refused to say how he felt. She wanted to feel his pulse, but he drew his hand away and turned his face to the wall. Whereupon little Fadette made a sign that she should be left alone with him, and when everyone had gone, she put out the lamp, so that there was no light in the room but that of the moon, which was then at the full. Then she came back to Sylvinet's side, and said to him in a tone of command which he obeyed like a child:

"Sylvinet! Give me your two hands in mine, and answer me truth. For I have not taken this trouble for money, and if I have taken the pains to come here, it is not to have your surly welcome and scurvy thanks. So pay heed

to what I am going to ask you, and to what you are going to tell me, for you will find it impossible to deceive me."

"Ask whatever you think right, Fadette," answered the twin, taken aback at being addressed so severely by this little jackanapes whom he had so often answered, in the old days, with a shower of stones.

"Sylvain Barbeau," she went on, "it appears that you wish to die."

Sylvain stumbled mentally before he answered, and as little Fadette pressed his hand somewhat tightly and let him feel the strength of her will, he said with much confusion :

"And isn't dying the happiest thing that could come to me, now that I see that I am a grief and hindrance to my family with my health and with——"

"Say it all out, Sylvain. You must conceal nothing from me."

"And with this anxious mind of mine that I cannot change," continued the twin, quite overcome.

"And also with your badness of heart," said Fadette, in a tone so harsh that it made him feel angry, and afraid even more.

## XXXVIII

"WHY do you accuse me of being bad at heart?" he said. "You're insulting me when you see that I haven't the strength to defend myself."

"I am telling you the truth about yourself, Sylvain," answered Fadette. "And I shall tell you lots more too. I have no pity for your sickness, because I know enough about it to see that it is not really serious, and that if you are in any danger, it is of going mad. You are trying your hardest to do so, without knowing where your malice and weakness of spirit are leading you."

"You may reproach me with weakness of spirit," said Sylvinet. "But as for malice, that's a reproach I do not deserve."

"Don't try to defend yourself," answered Fadette. "I know you better than you think, Sylvain, and I tell you that weakness engenders falseness. And it's for that reason that you are selfish and ungrateful."

"If you think so ill of me, Fanchon Fadet, it must be because my brother Landry has spoken very ill of me in his conversation, and has shown

you how little he cares for me: for if you do know me, or think you know me, it can only be through him."

"That's what I expected from you, Sylvain. I knew quite well you wouldn't say a dozen words without complaining of your brother or accusing him. Because your fondness for your brother was so wild and uncontrolled that it now begins to change to spite and rancour. It was from that I knew you were half out of your mind and bad at heart. Well, listen, I tell you that Landry is ten thousand times fonder of you than you are of him: and what proves it is that he never says a word of blame against you, however much you hurt him, while you blame him for everything, when he does nothing but give in to you and help you. How could I fail to see the difference between him and you? And besides, the more good Landry said about you, the more ill I thought of you, because I came to see that so good a brother could be misunderstood only by an unjust mind."

"And you hate me, do you, Fadette? I had made no mistake about that. I knew well that you were robbing me of my brother's love in slandering me to him."

"And I expected that too, Master Sylvain, and very glad I am that you at last face up to me on that. Well, I answer you that you are bad-hearted and a child of lies, because you ungratefully insult someone who has always helped you and defended you in her heart, although she

knew that you were hostile to her; someone who deprived herself a hundred times of the greatest pleasure, nay the only pleasure, that she had in the world, that of seeing Landry and staying with him, in order to send Landry to you and to give him the joy she withheld from herself. And yet I owed you naught. You have always been my enemy, and as far back as I can remember, I never met any child so harsh and haughty as you were with me. I might easily have wanted to take my revenge for that. I did not lack for chances. If I did not take one, if I gave you back good for evil without your knowing it, it is because I have a high idea of what a Christian soul must forgive in its neighbour to be pleasing in the sight of God. But when I mention God to you, I dare say you hardly listen, for you are His enemy, and the enemy of your own salvation."

"I will listen to a lot from you, Fadette. But that is too much. You are accusing me of being a heathen."

"And were you not saying just now that you longed for death? Do you call that a Christian idea?"

"I didn't say that, Fadette, I said——"

And Sylvinet stopped short, startled at the thought of what he had said, for in the face of Fadette's remonstrances it appeared impious.

But she would not stop at that, and continued to rate him.

"It may be," she said, "that your word was

worse than your thought. For I have an idea that what you want is not so much to die as to remain master in your family and a torment to your sorrowing mother, and to your twin brother, who is simple enough to believe that you want to end your life. But not I: I am not going to be your dupe, Sylvain! I believe that you are just as much afraid of death as anyone, and even more, and that you are trifling with the fear you rouse in the hearts of those who cherish you. It pleases you to see the wisest and most necessary resolves always yielding before your threats to take your life. And it is certainly very convenient and very pleasant to be able to twist everyone round your little finger by just having to say one word. That is how you master them all here. But it is unnatural. You do these things in ways that God frowns upon, and God is punishing you, making you still more wretched than you would be if you obeyed instead of commanding. So there you are, weary of a life that has been made too easy for you. I am going to tell you, Sylvain, wherein you fail to be a good, decent lad. It is because you did not have rough parents, frequent want, no daily bread, and plenty of hard knocks. If you had been reared in the same school as myself and my brother Jeanet, you wouldn't be ungrateful, you'd be thankful for the smallest thing. Now, Sylvain, don't you fall back on the fact of your being a twin. There's been far too much said, I know, in your hearing about this fondness of

twins, and how it was a law of nature and how you would die if it were thwarted. Of course you thought you were obeying your destiny by carrying this fondness to extremes. But God is not so unjust as to mark us down for an untoward fate even in our mothers' wombs. He is not so evil as to give us ideas that we can never surmount. And you insult Him, heathen that you are, by believing that your life-blood contains more strength and evil destiny than there is power of reason and resistance in your soul. Unless you are mad, I shall never believe that you could not fight your jealousy, if you so desired. But you do not desire to, because this vice of your soul has been too much indulged, and because you value your duty less than your whim."

Sylvinet answered nothing, and let Fadette rebuke him a long while yet without a sign of disapproval. He felt that at bottom she was right, and that only in one point had she failed in indulgence towards him : that was, in her seeming belief that he had never fought against his fault, and that he had been fully aware of his egoism : whereas he had been an egoist without knowing it and without wishing it. This hurt him and shamed him sorely. He would have liked to have given her a fairer idea of his conscience. As for Fadette, she was quite aware that she exaggerated, and did so with the intention of giving his mind a good stir-up before capturing him by gentleness and consolation. So she forced

herself to speak harshly and to appear full of wrath. Yet in her heart she felt such pity and such fondness for him that she felt ill with her feigning, and came away herself more tired than she left Sylvinet.

## XXXIX

THE truth is that Sylvinet was not one half so ill as he seemed, or as he took pleasure in believing. When little Fadette felt his pulse, she had first of all realised that the fever was not a high one, and that if he had a touch of delirium, this came from his mind being sicklier and weaker than his body. She thought therefore that she ought to deal with him through his mind by making him thoroughly afraid of her, and at daybreak came back to him. He had hardly slept, but was calm and seemed to be downcast. At the sight of her, he held out his hand to her, instead of withdrawing it as he had done the evening before.

"Why do you offer your hand, Sylvain?" she said to him. "Do you want me to try your fever? I can see from your face that it's gone."

Sylvinet felt shame at having to withdraw his hand, which she had declined to touch.

"It was to bid you good-day, Fadette," he answered, "and to thank you for all the trouble you take for me."

"In that case, I accept your greeting," she said, taking his hand and holding it in her own.

"For I never reject what is honestly given, and I don't believe you are so false hearted as to show an interest in me which you did not at all feel."

Sylvain, though fully roused, felt much better for having his hand held in Fadette's, and in a very kindly tone he said to her:

"All the same, you gave me a bad time last night, Fanchon, and I don't understand how I bear you no grudge for it. I even think it very kind of you to come and see me after all the grounds for reproach I have given you."

Fadette sat down beside his bed, and spoke to him quite differently from the evening before. So much kindness and gentleness and tenderness did she display, that Sylvain felt a solace and pleasure all the greater for his having thought her so seriously angry with him. He wept freely, admitted all his faults, and begged her forgiveness and her friendship so honestly and earnestly that she clearly saw his heart to be sounder than his head. She let him open his heart without reserve, though still scolding him from time to time. And when she tried to remove her hand, he kept hold of it, for it seemed to him that this hand was healing his sickness and his sorrows at one and the same time.

When she saw that he had reached the point she desired, she said to him:

"I'm going out now, Sylvain, and you will get up. For your fever's gone, and you mustn't stay here coddling yourself while your mother

tires herself out helping you and wastes her time in keeping you company. Afterwards you shall eat what your mother gives you on my behalf. It will be meat. I know you'll say it disgusts you, and that you can only live now on paltry greenstuffs: But no matter: you must force yourself, and even if you feel repugnance, you must not let that be seen. It will give your mother pleasure to see you eating solid food; and for your own part, the repugnance you've once overcome and concealed will be less the next time, and gone altogether the third. You'll see if I'm not right. So good-bye; and don't be sending for me too soon again, for I know you won't be ill any more if you don't wish to be."

"So you won't be coming back this evening?" said Sylvinet. "I should have thought you'd be returning."

"I don't do my doctoring for money, Sylvain, and I've other things to do than looking after you when you aren't ill."

"You're right, Fadette. But do not think that the desire to see you is just more of my selfishness. It's something else. I felt relief in talking with you."

"Well, you're not a cripple, and you know where I live. You know quite well that I am going to be your sister by marriage, as I am already in friendship. So you can come and talk with me without any question of blame."

"I shall come, since you allow me to," said Sylvinet. "So you may look for me, Fadette.

I'm going to get up, though my head aches badly through having had no sleep and feeling so sorry for myself all night."

"I'm willing to take away your headache," she said. "But just think to yourself that this will be the last, and that I order you to sleep well the next night."

She laid her hand on his brow, and in five minutes' time he was so solaced and refreshed that he felt no more pain.

"I can see that I was wrong in refusing in this, Fadette," he said to her, "for you are a truly wise woman, and know how to charm sickness. Everyone else has done me harm with their drugs. But you, only by touching me, you cure me. If I could always be with you I think you would save me from ever being ill or troublesome again. But tell me, Fadette, are you not angry with me any more? Will you count on the promise I've given you to submit to you entirely?"

"I do count on it," she said. "And unless you change your mind, I shall love you as if you were my twin."

"If you really thought what you've just said, Fanchon, you'd thee and thou me, would you not? It isn't usual for twins to talk to each other so formally as we've been doing."

"Come along, Sylvain!" she said with new familiarity as she rose. "Up you get. Eat. Talk. Walk. Sleep. Those are the orders of the day. Tomorrow you'll go and work."

"And I'll go and see you," said Sylvinet.

" Good ! " she said.

And off she went with such a look of fondness and forgiveness that he suddenly felt the strength, as well as the desire, to leave his bed of misery and sloth.

## XL

MOTHER BARBEAU could not sufficiently marvel at little Fadette's skill, and that evening she said to her husband :

" Sylvinet's better than he has been for a good six months. He ate everything I put before him to-day, without any of his grimaces. And what is more strange still is that he talks of little Fadette as if she were God Himself. No praise can be too high for her, and he's very eager for his brother's return and marriage. It seems like a miracle. I don't know whether I'm waking or dreaming ! "

" Miracle or no miracle," said Barbeau, " that girl has a fine spirit, and I feel sure that it is bound to be lucky to have her in the family."

Three days later Sylvinet went to fetch his brother from Arthon. As a special favour, he had asked his father and Fadete that he might be the first to tell him of his happiness.

"All joys come to me at once, then," said Landry, almost overcome with delight in Sylvinet's arms, " as it is you who come to fetch me, and you seem to be as pleased as I am myself."

They came back together without dallying on

the way, as may well be imagined. And there were no happier folk in the world than the folk at the Bessonière when they found themselves all at the supper-table with little Fadette and little Jeanet too in their midst.

Life was very kind to them all for a whole half-year. For Nanette's hand was given to Young Caillaud, who was Landry's best friend outside of his family ; and it was decreed that the two marriages should take place at the same time. Sylvinet had become so fond of Fadette that he would do nothing without consulting her, and she had such sway over him that he seemed to regard her as his sister. He was no longer ill, and of jealousy there was no further question. Sometimes he might seem sad and broody ; but Fadette would scold him kindly, and immediately he became smiling and communicative.

Both marriages took place on the same day with the same Mass. And as the means were not wanting, fine junketings were held, so much so that old Caillaud, who had never lost his head in his life, made a show of being a little tipsy on the third day. No shadow fell on the joy of Landry and the whole of the family, and the same could be said of all the countryside. For the two families were rich, and little Fadette as rich as all the Barbeaus and Caillauds together, and they showed great generosity and charity to everyone. Fanchon was too good-hearted not to be anxious to return good for evil to all who had misjudged her. And later on, when Landry had

bought a fine property, which, with his own skill and his wife's, he managed excellently well, she had a pretty house built there in order to gather in all the waifs and strays of the commune for four hours every weekday ; and she herself, with her brother Jeanet, undertook the work of instructing them, teaching them true religion, and even helping the most necessitous in their want. She remembered her own unhappy and abandoned childhood, and the fine children she herself brought into the world were early trained to be kind and compassionate to those who were neither rich nor petted.

But what happened to Sylvinet amidst his family's happiness? Something that nobody could understand, something that gave Barbeau himself much to think about. About a month after the weddings of his brother and sister, his father was advising him to find a wife for himself likewise, but he answered that he felt no taste for marriage. Nay, for some time, he said, he had had an idea that he wished to satisfy, and that was to enlist as a soldier.

Males are none too plentiful in our families hereabouts, and the soil has no more arms than it needs, so voluntary enlistment is hardly ever heard of. So there was great wonderment at this decision, for which Sylvinet could give no other reason than his whim, and a taste for soldiering, which none had ever seen in him before. Nothing that his father and mother could say, nor his brothers and sisters either, nor

even Landry himself, could shake his resolution, and they were forced to tell Fanchon, as the best head and best counsellor of the family.

She talked things out with Sylvinet for two long hours, and when they parted it was seen that Sylvinet had been crying, and Fadette too. But they looked so calm and decided that no further objections could be raised when Sylvinet said that he was going on with it, and when Fanchon said that she approved his resolve, and prophesied good fortune for him in the course of time.

They could not be sure that she did not know a good deal more about the matter than she was willing to admit. So they did not venture on further resistance, and Mother Barbeau herself yielded, though not without many tears. Landry was in despair. But his wife said to him :

" It is God's will, and the duty of all of us to let Sylvain go. Believe me, I know what I'm saying, and ask me no more about it."

Landry escorted his brother as far as he could, and when he handed him his bundle, which up to the last moment he had insisted on carrying on his own shoulder, he almost thought he was giving him his own heart to carry away. He returned to find his beloved wife, and she had to look after him. For a full month his sorrow made him genuinely ill.

Sylvain showed no such symptoms, and continued his tramp right to the frontier : those were the days of the Emperor Napoleon's splen-

did wars. And although he had never had the slightest taste for the military life, his self-command was such that he was soon signalled out as a good soldier, brave in battle as a man who is only seeking the opportunity of death, yet gentle and submissive to discipline as a child, although strong in body as the toughest of veterans. He had received education enough to receive promotion, and soon earned it. And after ten years of trials, courage, and fine conduct, he became a captain, and with the Cross into the bargain.

"Ah, if only he could come back at last!" said Mother Barbeau to her husband the evening after they had received a pleasant letter, full of affection for them, for Landry and Fanchon, and for the whole family, young and old. Here he was, almost a general! It must be time for him to rest!

"He's risen to a good enough rank, and there's no need to go further," said old Barbeau. "It's no less of an honour for a family of peasant folk."

"Fadette was right when she said that this would happen," answered Mother Barbeau. "Yes, she foretold it, she did!"

"I dare say," said Barbeau. "But I can never understand myself why his ideas suddenly turned in that direction, nor how he changed his whole temper like that, he who was always so quiet and fond of his little comforts."

"My dear," said the mother, "our daughter-in-law knows a great deal more about it than she

likes to say. But you don't catch a mother like me, and I think I know just as much about things as our Fadette."

"Then it's quite time *I* was told!" answered old Barbeau.

"Well," continued Mother Barbeau, "our Fanchon is too much of a charmer. So much so that she had really charmed Sylvinet more than she would have desired. When she saw the spell working so completely, she would have wanted to take it back or to lessen it. But she could not. And our Sylvain, seeing that he was thinking too much of his brother's wife, was impelled by his honour and virtue to go away, and he was supported and approved in that by Fanchon herself."

"If that is so," said Barbeau, scratching his head, "I am very much afraid that he will never marry. For the wise woman at Clavières said long, long ago, that when he did fall in love with a woman, he would no longer be so crazy about his brother. But she also said that he would only love one woman in all his life, because he had too tender, too passionate a heart."